THE BLUE RAIDER

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A Tale of Adventure in the Southern Seas

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"WITH THEIR ARMS STILL BOUND FIRMLY TO THEIR SIDES, THE PRISONERS STUMBLED THROUGH THE FOREST."

THE BLUE RAIDER

A TALE OF ADVENTURE
IN THE SOUTHERN SEAS

BY
HERBERT STRANG

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HERBERT STRANG

Complete List of Stories

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'Now 's the time!'

Up and up, foot by foot, arrows whizzing and clicking

'Feel better?'

'The Raider!'

A score of dusky natives burst into the ring

Grinson marched in at the head of a procession

'Who says I ain't tattooed?'

With every step the descent became steeper

Kafulu sprang upon Meek from behind

The German flung a pail of water over the unconscious Meek

Noiselessly on his stocking soles tip-toed after the German

One of the Germans raised his revolver, but before he could fire, Hoole launched the spear at him

The leader of the dancers was just approaching when there was a roar, and the whirring propeller set up a hurricane which caught at his dress

Grinson let out a bellow like the blast of a fog-horn, and sprang from the trees, followed by a horde of natives

Grinson gave the boulder a shove in the desired direction

With a thunderous crash it struck the side of the vessel a few feet below the rail

Quickly they set their ladders against the barricade, and began to swarm up

CHAPTER I
A BEACH IN NEW GUINEA

"Tis a matter of twenty-five years since I was in a fix like this 'ere,' said the boatswain, ruminatively, turning a quid in his cheek. 'Ephraim, me lad, you can bear me out?'

'I can't rightly say as I can, Mr. Grinson,' said Ephraim, in his husky voice, 'but I 'll try.'

The boatswain threw a leg over the stern-post of the much-battered ship's boat that lay listed over just beyond the breakers of a rough sea, and cast a glance at the two young men who stood, with hands in pockets, gazing up at the cliffs. Their backs were towards him; they had either not heard, or were disinclined to notice what he had said.

'Ay, 'twas twenty-six year ago,' he resumed, in a voice like the note of an organ pipe. 'We was working between Brisbane and the Solomons, blackbirding and what not; 'twas before your time, young gents, but—-'

'What's that you 're saying?' demanded one of the two whose backs he had addressed.

'I was saying, sir, as how I was in a fix like this 'ere twenty-seven year ago, or it may be twenty-eight: Ephraim's got the head for figures. We was working between Brisbane and the Carolines–a tight little schooner she was, light on her heels. You can bear me out, Ephraim?'

'If so be 'twas the same craft, light and tight she was,' Ephraim agreed.

'Well, a tidal wave come along and pitched her clean on to a beach like as this might be–not a beach as you could respect, with bathing-boxes and a promenade, but a narrow strip of a beach, a reg'lar fraud of a beach, under cliffs as high as a church...'

'Say, Grinson, get a move on,' drawled the second of the two younger men. 'What about your beach? How does it help us, anyway?'

'Well, look at the difference, sir. There we was: schooner gone to pieces, a score of us cast ashore, three of us white men, the rest Kanakas. 'Tis thirty years since, but the recollection of them awful days gives me the 'orrors. My two white mates–the Kanakas ate 'em, being 'ungry. I drops a veil over that 'orrible tragedy.

Being about a yard less in the waist than I am to-day, I was nimble as a monkey, and went up those cliffs like greased lightning, broke off chunks of rock weighing anything up to half a ton, and pitched 'em down on the Kanakas scrambling up after me, panting for my gore. For three days and nights I kept 'em at bay, and my arms got so used to flinging down rocks that when I was rescued by a boat's crew from a Dutch schooner they kept on a-working regular as a pendulum, and they had to put me in a strait jacket till I was run down. You can bear me out, Ephraim, me lad?'

'I can't exactly remember all them particlers, Mr. Grinson, but truth 's truth, and 'tis true ye 've led a wonderful life, and stranger things have happened to ye–that I will say on my oath.'

'You were one of the two that were eaten, I suppose?' said the young man who had first spoken, eyeing Ephraim with a quizzical smile.

'Gee! That's the part Grinson dropped a veil over,' said the other. 'What's the moral of your pretty fairy story, Grinson?'

'Moral, sir? 'Tis plain.' He opened his brass tobacco-box, and deliberately twisted up another quid. Then he said impressively: 'Dog don't eat dog; otherways we 're all white men, and there 's no Kanakas.'

Phil Trentham laughed, a little ruefully.

'We may have to eat each other yet,' he said. Then, waving his arms towards the cliffs, he added: 'The prospect doesn't please–what do you make of it?'

The situation in which the four men found themselves had certainly no element of cheerfulness. They were the sole survivors from a tramp steamer which, on the previous day, had fallen a prey to a German raider. After a night's tossing in their small open boat, they had been cast up on this unknown shore, and when they examined the craft, marvelled that they escaped with their lives. Collision with a rock that just peeped above the breakers some fifty yards out had stove, in her garboard-strakes, a hole through which a man might creep. Luckily, the bag of ship's biscuits, which, with a keg of water, formed their whole stock of provisions, had not been washed out or injured.

But what of the future? The narrow strip of sandy beach on which they had been thrown stretched along the foot of high precipitous cliffs that showed a concave arc to the sea. At each horn a rocky headland jutted far out, its base washed high by the waves. The cliffs were rugged and appeared unscalable, even with the aid of the tufts of vegetation that sprouted here and there from fissures in their weather-beaten face. It seemed that they were shut in between the cliffs and the sea, penned between the headlands, confined to this strip of sand, perhaps two miles long, from which there was apparently no landward exit. Their boat

was unseaworthy; there was no way of escape by land or sea.

Phil Trentham, working copra on a remote island of the South Pacific, had learnt of the outbreak of war some months after the event, and taken passage on the first steamer that called, intending to land at the nearest port and thence to make his way to some centre of enlistment. Among the few passengers he had chummed up with a young fellow about his own age–one Gordon P. Hoole, who hailed from Cincinnati, had plenty of money, and was touring the Pacific Islands in tramp steamers for amusement. Each was in his twentieth year, stood about five feet ten, and wore a suit of ducks and a cowboy hat; there the likeness between them ended. Trentham was fair, Hoole dark. The former had full ruddy cheeks, broad shoulders, and massive arms and calves; the latter was lean and rather sallow, more wiry than muscular. Trentham parted his hair; Hoole's rose erect from his brow like a short thick thatch. Both had firm lips and jaws, and their eyes, unlike in colour, were keen with intelligence and quick with humour.

Their two companions in misfortune presented an odd contrast to them and to each other. Josiah Grinson, forty-eight years of age, was five feet six in height, immensely broad, with a girth of nearly sixty inches, arms as thick as an average man's legs, and legs like an elephant's. His broad, deeply bronzed face, in the midst of which a small nose, over a long clean upper lip, looked strangely disproportionate, was fringed with a thick mass of wiry black hair. Little eyes of steely blue gazed out upon the world with a hard unwinking stare. He wore a dirty white sweater, much-patched blue trousers, and long boots. His big voice was somewhat monotonous in intonation, and he had been known to doze in the middle of a sentence, wake up and continue without a flaw in the construction.

Ephraim Meek, who had been mate to Grinson's boatswain for about a quarter of a century, was a head taller, but lost the advantage of his inches through a forward stoop of his gaunt frame. Where Grinson was convex Meek was concave. His hollow cheeks were covered with straggling, mouse-coloured hair; his long thin nose made him look more inquisitive than he really was; his faded grey eyes, slightly asquint, seemed to be drawn as by a magnet to the countenance of his superior. Meek was a whole-hearted admirer of the boatswain, and their long association was marred by only one thing–a perpetual struggle between Meek's personal devotion and his conscientious regard for veracity. No one knew what pangs Grinson's frequent appeals to 'Ephraim, me lad,' to 'bear him out' cost the anxious man. But he had always managed to satisfy the boatswain without undue violence to his own scruples, and Grinson had never felt the strain.

'What do I make of it?' repeated Hoole. 'Nix!'

'Where do you suppose we are, Grinson?' asked Trentham.

'I ain't good at supposing, sir, but I know we 're somewheres on the north coast of New Guinea,' Grinson replied. 'Which I mean to say it's inhabited by cannibals, and I was nearly eat once myself. 'Twas twenty or maybe twenty-one years ago, when—-'

'By and by, Grinson,' interrupted Trentham. 'It's a gruesome story, no doubt, and we 'll fumigate it with our last go-to-bed pipe.'

'Just so,' Hoole put in. 'I guess we 'd better explore. It don't feel good on this beach.'

'Certainly. To save time we 'd better split up. You take Grinson and go one way; I 'll go the other with Meek. Whoever sees a way up the cliffs, signal to the others.'

They paired off, and walked in opposite directions along the sand. A line of seaweed some thirty feet from the cliffs indicated high-water mark, and relieved them of any fear of being engulfed by the tide.

Trentham and Meek had struck off to the west, and as they went along they scanned the rugged face of the cliffs for a place where it would be possible to scale them. For nearly half a mile they roamed on in silence; Meek was one of those persons who do not invite conversation. Then, however, the seaman came to a halt.

'I wouldn't swear to it, sir,' he said in his deprecating way, 'but if you 'll slew your eyes a point or two off the cliffs, I do believe you 'll see the stump of a mast.'

He raised his lank hand and pointed.

'That won't help us much,' said Trentham, looking towards a pocket of sand some distance above high-water mark, and surrounded by straggling bushes. 'We can't sail off in a wreck.'

'That's true as gospel, sir, but it came into my mind, like, that where there 's a mast there 's a hull, and p'r'aps it 'll give us a doss-house for the night.'

'It 'll be choked with sand. Still, we 'll have a look at it.'

They walked towards the spot where four or five feet of a jagged mast stood up apparently from the embedding sand. As they emerged from the surrounding bushes they discovered parts of the bulwarks projecting a few inches above a mound of silted-up sand, a little higher than their heads. Clambering up the easiest slope, and stepping over the rotting woodwork, Trentham gave a low whistle of surprise.

'Come up and have a look at this, Meek,' he said to the man standing in his bent-kneed attitude below.

Meek came to his side, and drew his fingers through his thin whiskers as he contemplated the scene before him. Then he turned his eyes on Trentham,

[image]

'COME UP AND HAVE A LOOK AT THIS, MEEK.'

and from him to the cliffs and the beach around.

'Rum, sir!' he ejaculated. 'Uncommon rum!'

While the greater part of the vessel was deep in sand, a certain area of the deck around the base of the mast was covered with only a thin layer, through which the iron ring of a hatch was clearly visible. On all sides of it the sand appeared to have been cleared away, and heaped up like a regular rampart.

'Some one has been here, and not so long ago,' said Trentham. 'It's certainly queer. See if you can lift the hatch; we may as well go below.'

Meek hesitated.

'If so be there 's cannibals—-' he began.

'Nonsense! They wouldn't be stifling under hatches.'

'Or maybe dead corpses or skellingtons.'

'Come, pull up the hatch; I 'll go down first.'

Brushing away the thin covering of sand, Meek seized the ring and heaved. The hatch came up so easily that he almost lost his balance.

'The stairway 's quite sound,' said Trentham, peering into the depths. 'Stand by!'

He stepped upon the companion, and descended. In a few seconds Meek heard the striking of a match, and Trentham's voice ringing out of the vault.

'Come down, Meek; there are no skeletons.'

Meek looked around timorously, sighed, and went slowly down the ladder. Trentham had just struck another match, and was holding it aloft. The flame disclosed a small cabin, the floor space almost filled with a massive table and three chairs of antique make, all of dark oak. Upon the table lay an old sextant, a long leather-bound telescope, a large mug of silver-gilt, heavily chased, a silver spoon, and several smaller objects. On the wall hung a large engraved portrait in a carved oak frame, representing a stout, hook-nosed, heavily wigged gentleman in eighteenth century costume, with a sash across the shoulder and many stars and decorations on the breast.

Meek breathed heavily. The match went out.

'I can't afford to use all my matches,' said Trentham. 'Run up and cut a branch from a bush; that'll serve for a torch for the present. And signal to the others.'

'I don't hardly like to say it, sir, but I 'm afeard as my weak voice won't

reach so far.'

'My good man, you 've got long arms. Wave 'em about. Climb up the mast. Use your gumption!'

Meek mounted to the deck, and Trentham smiled as he heard a husky voice shouting, 'Ahoy!' After some minutes the man returned with a thick dry branch.

'I give a hail, sir, and flung my arms about frantic, and Mr. Grinson, he seed me. I can't say he heard me, not being sure. He 've a wonderful voice himself–wonderful, and I heard him answer as clear as a bell.'

'That's all right!' said Trentham, lighting the branch. 'We 've made a discovery, Meek.'

'Seemingly, sir. I 'm fair mazed, and that's the truth of it. Who might be the old soldier yonder, and what's he wear that thing on his head for? He ain't a sea captain, that I 'll swear, and I wonder at any sailor-man sticking up a soldier's picture in his cabin.'

'You 're quite right, Meek,' replied Trentham, who had been scrutinising the portrait. 'The old soldier, as you call him, is a king.'

'You don't say so, sir! Where's his crown, then?'

'Ah, I wonder where! The poor man lost his crown and his head too. It's Louis XVI., King of France a hundred years ago and more. Here it is in French, below the engraving: "Engraved after the portrait by Champfleury." We 're in a French vessel, Meek–the ship of some French explorer, no doubt, who was wrecked here goodness knows how many years ago.'

Meek looked around again, and slightly shivered.

'I wonder what they did with the bones?' he murmured.

'What bones?'

'The cannibals, I mean, sir, when they 'd eat the captain and crew.'

'You 've a ghastly imagination, Meek. A question more to the point is, how it happens that these things remain here, so well preserved. There 's very little sand on the floor, as you see; any one would think that somebody comes here now and then to tidy up. Would your cannibals do that, do you think?'

'I wouldn't like to say, sir. I 'll ask Mr. Grinson; he knows 'em, being nearly eat himself. But I don't know who 'd have a good word for cannibals.'

'At any rate, they aren't thieves. This mug, for instance, is silver gilt, and of some value; here 's a coat-of-arms engraved on it, and it must have been polished not very long ago. Yes, it has been rubbed with sand; look at the slight scratches. I 'm beginning to think rather well of your cannibals.'

'Touch wood, sir,' said Meek earnestly. 'I wouldn't say a thing like that, not till I knowed. And as for thieves–well, if a man's bad enough to eat another man, he 's bad enough to be a thief, and if he ain't a thief, 'tis because he don't know the vally of things. Ignorance is a terrible unfortunate calamity.'

A sonorous bellow from above caused Meek to jump.

'There, now!' he said. 'My head 's full of cannibals, and 'tis Mr. Grinson. We 're down below!' he called.

'Is the place afire?' asked Grinson, sniffing, as he bent his head over the hatchway. 'I thought 'twas Mr. Trentham smoking when I seed the smoke, but I see you 're disinfecting the cabin, sir, and I don't wonder. This 'ere wreck must have been collecting germs a good few years.'

'Come down, Grinson,' said Trentham. 'Where 's Mr. Hoole?'

'Taking a look up the chimbley, sir.'

'What chimney?'

'Well, that's what he called it; for myself I 'd call it a crack.' He came ponderously down the ladder. 'Jiminy! Ephraim, me lad, you never tidied up so quick in your life before.'

'I can't truthfully say as I tidied up, Mr. Grinson,' said Meek. "Tis uncommon tidy for a cabin, that's a fact.'

'Picters, too! The master o' this 'ere ship must have been a rum cove!'

'He was a Frenchman, Mr. Trentham says.'

'That accounts for it. I remember a French captain—-'

The chimney, Grinson,' Trentham interrupted. 'You haven't explained—-'

'True, sir; it was took out of my mind, seeing things what I didn't expect. As we come along, sir, Mr. Hoole he says: "Ain't that a chimbley?" "Where?" says I, not seeing no pot nor cowl. "There!" says he, and he points to what I 'd call a long crack in the cliff.'

'Where is it?'

'About half a cable length astern, sir. Mr. Hoole went to have a look at it. Here he is!'

'Phew! That torch of yours is rather a stinker!' said Hoole, springing lightly down the ladder. 'My! This is interesting, Trentham. I wondered where the path led.'

'You 've found a path?'

'Sure! Didn't you see it?'

'No. The fact is, Meek and I were so much taken up with the wreck that we forgot everything else. But we didn't see any footprints in the sand.'

'There are none about here, except yours. The path is way back a few yards. I caught sight of a narrow fissure in the cliff, what we call a chimney in the Rockies. I pushed through the undergrowth to take a keek at it, and came upon distinct signs of a beaten track, leading straight to the chimney. That's barely wide enough to admit a man; Grinson would stick, I guess; but 'tis surely used as a passage. There are notches cut in the cliff at regular intervals.'

'Then we can get away?'

'Sure! All but Grinson, that is. We 'd have to leave him behind.'

'Don't say so, sir,' said Meek. 'Mr. Grinson 's not so fat as he was–not by a long way. I 'm afeard if he stays, I must stay too.'

'Thank 'ee, Ephraim, me lad,' said Grinson warmly. 'But Mr. Hoole is pulling my leg. You take him too serious; he 's a gentleman as will have his joke. He wouldn' go for to desert two poor seamen.'

'I never could understand a joke–never!' said Meek. '"Tis a misfortune, but so I was born.'

Hoole and Trentham, meanwhile, had been examining the relics and discussing the bearing of their discoveries on the situation.

'It's quite clear that the wreck is visited,' said Trentham.

'By natives, of course. Why? How often? It doesn't matter much, except that if we saw them, we might get a notion as to whether we could safely go among them and get their help. You are sure the chimney is climbable?'

'Certain. The notches are deep, and you could set your back against the opposite wall and climb without using your hands.'

'I 'll have a look at it. Then we had better go back to our boat, get some grub, and talk things over. It's too late to go in for further adventures to-day.'

'That's so. Say, I 'd leave the hatch off for a while. The place reeks–it would give us away.'

'Right! We 'll clear out. The men can keep guard above while we 're examining that chimney.'

CHAPTER II
THE DRUMS

An hour later they were seated in the boat, nibbling biscuits and taking turns to sip at the water in their keg.

'Now that we 've proved that Grinson can just squeeze into the chimney,' said Hoole, 'I guess we had better climb to-morrow and take a look round. But what then? What do you know about this blamed island, Grinson?'

'Not as much as you could stuff into a pipe, in a manner of speaking,' said Grinson. 'A few years ago I spent a couple of weeks in Moresby and round about–you can bear me out, Ephraim, me lad–and I know no more than what I picked up there. That's on the south-east: we 're on the north, on what's German ground,

or was; and by all that's said, the Germans never took much trouble to do more than hoist their flag. They 've got a port somewhere, but whether we 're east of it or west of it, I don't know no more than the dead.'

'So when we climb, we shan't know which way to go,' said Trentham. 'Yet our only chance is to make along the coast till we reach some white settlement, unless we could manage to attract attention on some passing ship. You don't know what the natives are like hereabout?'

'No, sir. They do say there 's little chaps about two feet high in the forests, but I never seed 'em. The folks on the coast ain't so little, and down Moresby way they 've learnt to behave decent; but I reckon they 're pretty wild in other parts, and I know some of 'em are 'orrid cannibals, 'cos I was nearly eat myself once. We was lying becalmed off the Dutch coast, away in the west of this 'ere island, and some of us had gone ashore for water, and—-'

'What's that noise?' exclaimed Hoole, springing up.

A faint purring sound came to their ears.

'It's uncommonly like an aeroplane engine,' said Trentham. 'It would be rather fun to be taken off in an aeroplane.'

'Never in life!' said Meek mournfully. 'It 'ud turn my weak head.'

'Your head will be quite safe, Meek,' said Trentham. 'The only aeroplane that's likely to be in these latitudes is the one that scouted for the German raider. Our poor captain guessed what was coming when he saw the thing, and three hours afterwards they got us, and he was dead.'

'There it is!' cried Hoole, pointing sea-ward.

They were just able to discern the machine, little more than a speck, flying along from west to east. In a few minutes it had disappeared.

'Flying after other game,' said Trentham. 'You were saying, Grinson?'

'And I got parted from the rest, through chasing a butterfly, which I was always a stoodent of nature. I had just nabbed a lovely pink 'un with gold spots, when a crowd of naked savages surrounded me, their faces hidjous with paint, and their spears pointing at me like the spokes of a wheel. Not having my pistol with me, I couldn't shoot 'em all down one after another, so I offered 'em the butterfly, then a brass button, and one or two other little things I had about me, which any decent nigger would 'a been thankful for. But no! Nothing but my gore would satisfy 'em, or rather my fat, for I was in them days twice the size I am now. You can bear me out, Ephraim, me lad?'

'I wouldn't be sure 'twas exactly twice, Mr. Grinson, but not far short–a pound or so under, p'r'aps.'

'I thought my last hour was come, and it came on me sudden that I hadn't made my will—-'

'There 's a smudge of smoke far out,' cried Hoole. 'If we get on a rock and

wave our shirts, somebody 'll see us.'

They looked eagerly out to sea. A steamer, just distinguishable on the horizon, was proceeding in the same direction as the aeroplane they had noticed a few minutes before. Grinson put up his hands to shade his eyes as he gazed.

'If I had a pair of glasses, or that there telescope in the wreck! Ah! I may be wrong, but I believe 'tis that ruffian of a pirate as sunk our craft yesterday. Seems to me we 'd better keep our shirts on our backs, sir.'

'I dare say you 're right,' said Hoole. 'For my part I 'd rather try my luck with cannibals than with those Germans again.'

'Which I agree with you, sir,' said Grinson. 'With luck, or I may say gumption, you can escape from cannibals, like I did.'

'Ah, yes. How did you get out of that ring of spears?'

The boatswain took such pleasure in retailing his yarns that the two young men gave him plenty of rope.

'I was fair upset at not having made my will, thinking of how the lawyers would fight over my remains, in a manner of speaking. So I takes out my pocketbook and my fountain pen, and with a steady hand I begins to write. It shows what comes of a man doing his dooty. Them cannibals was struck all of a heap when they seed black water oozing out of a stick. They lowered the points of their spears, and, instead of being a circle, they formed up three deep behind me, looking over my shoulder. It come into my head they took me for a medicine-man, and the dawn of a great hope lit up my pearly eyes.'

'Where did you get that, Grinson?' asked Hoole.

'What, sir?'

'That about "pearly eyes" and the rest.'

'Oh, that! It took my fancy in a nice little story called *Lord Lyle's Revenge* as a kind lady once give me, and I 've never forgot it. Well, as I was saying, I set to droring a portrait of the ugliest mug among 'em–fuzzy hair, nose bones and all–they a-watching me all the time with bated breath; and when I 'd put in the finishing stroke, blest if every man Jack of 'em didn't begin to quarrel about whose photo it was. Never did you hear such a hullabaloo. Fixing of 'em with my eagle eye, I waved 'em back like as if I was shooing geese, took a pin from my weskit and stuck the portrait on a tree, and told 'em to fight it out who was the ugliest of 'em, 'cos he was the owner. The cannibals made a rush for the tree, every one of 'em trying to prevent the rest from getting the picture, and I lit my pipe and walked away as steady as a bobby on dooty. You can bear me out, Ephraim, me lad?'

'Wonderful steady you was, Mr. Grinson, and the bottle of rum empty too. I couldn't have walked so steady. The other chaps said as how you 'd been taking a nap, but I never believed 'em.'

'Never go napping on dooty, Ephraim; which I mean to say we 'll have to take watch and watch to-night, gentlemen. What with cannibals and them big hermit crabs and other vermin, 'twouldn't be safe for us all to have our peepers shut.'

'Very true, Grinson,' said Trentham. 'The boat's rather exposed: you had better choose a spot on the beach where we can shelter for the night. There are some rocks yonder that look promising. Then we 'll arrange about watching.'

Grinson and Meek went off together; the others meanwhile strolled up and down, discussing plans for the morrow.

'We 're so badly off,' said Trentham. 'You 've luckily got your revolver; any spare cartridges?'

'A score or so.'

'I 've only a penknife, worse luck. Grinson has a long knife, and Meek, no doubt, has a knife of some sort; but three knives and a revolver won't enable us to put up much of a fight if we really do come across any cannibals.'

'And I guess that fountain pens and pocket books won't be much good. We couldn't patch up the boat?'

'Without tools? Besides, I shouldn't care to risk a voyage. We may have a chance of reaching some settlement overland, and I dare say could pick up some food; but on the sea we might drift for weeks, even if we could exist on our few biscuits and little water.'

'Well, old man, we 'll get what sleep we can and try the chimney in the morning. The sky promises fair weather, anyway; did you ever see such a splendid sunset?'

They were facing west, and beyond the headland the sun, a gorgeous ball of fire, was casting a blood-red glow on the scarcely rippling sea. On the cliffs the leaves of the palms were edged with crimson, and flickered like flames as they were gently stirred by the breeze. The two friends stood side by side, silently watching the magnificent panorama. Suddenly Hoole caught Trentham by the arm, and pulled him down behind a rock.

'My sakes!' he exclaimed under his breath. 'D' you see people moving between the wreck and the cliff?'

Trentham took off his hat and peered cautiously over the rocks.

'You 're right,' he said. 'It's not easy to make 'em out; they 're in the shadow of the headland; we 're a good mile away, I fancy. They can't see us at present, but we had better warn the others; the sun as it moves round will strike us presently.'

They returned to the spot which Grinson had selected for their camping place–a space of clear sand protected on one side by a group of rocks and on the other by a clump of bushes spreading from the base of the cliffs. Meek had already brought up their scanty stores from the boat; Grinson had stripped off

his jersey and shirt.

'If you 'll take my advice, gentlemen,' he said, 'you 'll swill the sticky off– you 'll sleep all the better for it. Bathing all in I wouldn't advise, in case of sharks.'

'Shall we get any sleep, I wonder?' said Trentham. 'There are men on the beach, Grinson.'

'Men, sir?'

'Cannibals!' murmured Meek.

'We saw figures moving between the wreck and the cliff.'

'Holy poker!' exclaimed the boatswain, rapidly drawing on his shirt. Trentham noticed momentarily the figure of a bird tattooed on his upper left arm. 'Hope they don't come this way.'

'Why shouldn't we take the bull by the horns and go *their* way?' said Hoole. 'I 'll tackle 'em, if you like. You don't know but we 'd make friends of them.'

'Not by no manner of means, sir, I beg you,' said Grinson. 'The New Guinea savages are the fiercest in creation; Ephraim can bear me out; cunning as the devil, and that treacherous. The tales I could tell! But I wouldn't freeze your blood, not for the world; all I say is, keep out of their clutches.'

'Where can we hide, if so be they come this way?' faltered Meek.

'There 's nothing to bring them along this bare beach,' said Trentham. 'They won't see us if we remain here; I doubt whether they 'll even see the boat. No doubt they 'll be gone by the morning.'

'Just so,' said Hoole. 'Still, we 've got to meet them some time, probably—-'

'Better by daylight, sir,' said Grinson. 'Wild beasts and savages are always most fearsome at night. I say, lay low.'

'As low as you can,' Meek added.

The glow of sunset faded, and in the deepening shade the figures were no longer visible. The four men sat in their shelter, talking in undertones, none of them disposed to sleep. For a while only the slow tumbling surf bore a murmurous counterpoint to their voices. All at once a dull boom struck upon their ears. It was not the explosive boom of a gun, but a deep prolonged note. Soon it was followed by a similar sound, at a slightly higher pitch, and the two notes alternated at regular intervals.

'Drums, by the powers!' ejaculated Grinson. '"Tis a dance, or a feast, or both.'

'A mighty slow dance,' said Hoole. 'I 'd fall asleep between the steps.'

But even as he spoke the sounds became louder and more rapid, and presently in the midst of the now continuous booming a voice was heard, chanting in monotone. Into this broke a deeper growling note as from many voices in unison, and after the song and accompaniment had continued for some time with ever-increasing vigour and volume, they came to a sudden end in a short

series of strident barks, half smothered by the clamour of the drums.

The four men had risen, and leaning on the rocks, with their faces towards the sounds, had listened to the strange chorus.

'It's extraordinarily thrilling,' said Trentham. 'I 'd never have believed that drums could make such music.'

'It trickles down my spine,' Hoole confessed. 'And they 're pretty nearly a mile away. What must it be on the spot? Say, if they start again, shall we creep along and see?'

'I 'm game. Look! They 've lit a fire. There's some ceremony on hand–not a thing to be missed.'

'Which means a feast, sir,' said Grinson. 'If you ask me, I say don't go. It 'll turn your blood.'

'Special if 'tis a man they eat,' said Meek.

'You two stay home; Mr. Trentham and I will go,' said Hoole. 'The rocks and scrub will give plenty of cover; besides, the feasters will be busy. We 'll be unseen spectators in the gallery.'

Heedless of the further expostulations of the seamen, Trentham and Hoole set off, and keeping well under the shadow of the cliffs, tramped rapidly towards the growing blaze. As they drew nearer to it, they moved with greater caution, careful not to come directly within the glow. The drums recommenced their slow tapping, and when the white men arrived at a spot where, screened by the bushes, they could see unseen, the dance had just begun.

The fire was kindled on a clear space between the wreck and the vegetation that clothed the foot of the cliffs. Beyond it, nearer the vessel, about twenty natives were stamping in time with the two drums, placed at one end of the line. They were men of average height, well built, but rather thin in the legs, wearing fantastic head-dresses, bone or coral necklaces and armlets, and scanty loin-cloths. The watchers were at once struck by certain differences in the types of feature. All the savages were a dull black in colour, except where they had painted their skins white or red, but while the majority had wide bridgeless noses and frizzy hair, there were some whose noses were arched, and whose hair, though curled, was neither stiff nor bushy. Every face was disfigured by a long skewer of bone passed through the nose.

The dance was disappointing. The men did little more than stamp up and down, swaying a little now and then, stepping a pace or two forward or backward, shaking their spears, and emitting a grunt. There was no excitement, no crescendo of martial fury.

'A very tame performance!' whispered Hoole.

But Trentham was no longer watching the dance. Beyond the dancers, only occasionally visible as they moved, there was something that had fixed his atten-

tion. He could not quite determine what it was, but a suspicion was troubling him. Between the swaying figures there appeared, now and again, a whitish object partially obscured by bush, and barely within the circle of light from the fire. It was motionless, but the fugitive glimpses that Trentham caught of it made him more and more uneasy.

'You see that white thing?' he whispered, taking Hoole by the arm.

'Yep! What of it?'

Trentham pressed his arm more closely. The dancers had moved a little farther apart, and for the first time the object behind them was completely outlined.

'By gum, it's a man!' murmured Hoole.

'And a white man!' added Trentham. 'I was afraid so.'

CHAPTER III
THE CHIMNEY

Noiselessly the two spectators slipped away through the bushes. Startled by the discovery of a white man, whose very stillness declared him a prisoner in bonds among these dancing savages, they felt the need of talking freely, unrestrained by precautions against being overheard. They hurried along at the base of the cliffs until they were out of earshot, then sat on a low rock where they could still see all that went on around the fire.

'Can it be that planter fellow on the *Berenisa*? What was his name?' said Trentham.

'You mean Grimshaw; he was the only man besides ourselves who wore ducks. I don't know. Grimshaw was a small man; the prisoner seemed a big fellow. I couldn't see his face.'

'Nor I. Whoever it is, I 'm afraid his number 's up.'

'I didn't take much stock of Grinson's yarns about cannibals, but it appears he 's right. The niggers would hardly bring their prisoner down the chimney for the fun of it, or the trouble of taking him up again.'

'Did you see a cooking-pot?'

'No, I was too busy watching the dancers to look around.'

'We 'll have to get him away.'

'Whew! That's a tall proposition, Trentham.'

'Confoundedly; but we can't stand off and see a white man cut up! Hang it all, Hoole, it's too horrible to think about!'

'Ghastly. Yet remember where we are. We might get him loose, but what then? They 'd hunt us over this strip of beach, and we 've proved pretty well there 's nowhere to hide.'

'Our only chance is to get him up the chimney.'

'My dear man!'

'It may be out of the frying-pan into the fire, if there are more of the savages on top, but down below his fate is certain, whereas—-'

'But there 's the climbing. I 've done some in the Rockies, but I guess you 're a tenderfoot at mountaineering, and as for the seamen—-'

'If they can scramble up rigging, they ought to be able to manage that chimney. I 'm sure I could. And really, there 's no time to lose. They 're still drumming and dancing, but who knows when they 'll feel hungry? We had better bring up the others at once.'

They got up, and hastened towards their camping-place.

'It's the first step that costs,' remarked Hoole. 'How to get him away with the firelight full on him. It's a ticklish stunt.'

'We can but try–we must try! Hullo! Here 's Grinson.'

The two seamen stepped towards them from the shelter of a bush.

'We came to meet you, sir,' Grinson began.

'Hush, Grinson!' said Trentham. 'Muffle that organ-pipe of yours. The savages have got a white man.'

'Never!' exclaimed Meek, in husky astonishment.

'He 's lying tied to a bush there, apparently,' Trentham went on. 'A man dressed in white.'

'Mr. Grimshaw! How did they get him?' said Grinson. 'He must have been cast ashore.'

'We don't think it's he, but it may be. Anyhow, we must try to rescue him.'

'Save us, sir! We 'll only go into the pot too. It will be like taking a bone from a dog, only worse.'

'Worse ain't the word for it,' said Meek. 'And you 'd go first, Mr. Grinson, being a man of flesh.'

'Tough, Ephraim–uncommon tough, me lad. Any nigger of sense would rather have something young and juicy, like Mr. Trentham. I remember once—-'

'Not now, Grinson,' Trentham interposed. 'We must make up our minds; there 's no time for recollections.'

'Plenty of time, sir. These 'ere cannibals never start cooking till the moon 's high aloft, and she 's only just peeping above the skyline.'

'That's a relief, if you 're right—-'

'I can bear him out, sir,' said Meek.

'It gives us more time to make our plans. Our idea is, Grinson, if we get the prisoner away, to climb up that crack in the cliff; there's no safety below. There may be danger above, of course; it's a choice between two evils. We meant to try our luck to-morrow, you know; we only anticipate by a few hours, and though climbing will be more difficult in the darkness than it would be in the light, you and Meek are used to clambering up the rigging at all hours and in all weathers—-'

'Say no more about that, sir. We 'd back ourselves against cats.'

'Or monkeys,' suggested Meek.

'You 've got no tail, Ephraim. 'Tis not the climbing as I 've any fear about, sir; 'tis first the bonfire, second what's up top, third and last–there ain't no third, now I come to think of it.'

'The second we 've agreed to chance. The first–well, the only thing is to work round the savages and get between them and the chimney; then one of us must creep or crawl as close to them as he can, and watch his opportunity. There's no need for more than one.'

'That's my stunt,' said Hoole.

'Not at all. It's between you and me; we 're younger and quicker on our pins than the others; but why you should have the most risky part of the job—-'

'The reason 's as clear as daylight. The quickest climber ought to go last. I allow that Grinson and Meek are probably more spry than I am in climbing; but in any case they 're ruled out. You 've never climbed a chimney–I have. I think that fixes it.'

'But the prisoner. It's unlikely he can climb quickly, and the last man couldn't go faster than he.'

'You ought to have been a lawyer, Trentham. But I have you yet. The last man may have to hold the savages off while the prisoner, slow by hypothesis, does his climb. Then speed will be vital when he climbs himself–see?'

'Axing your pardon, sir, and speaking like a father, as you may say,' said Grinson, 'there 's only one way of settling a little difference so 's to satisfy both parties. I 've seed many a quarrel nipped in the bud—-'

'A quarrel, you juggins!' cried Trentham. 'There 's no quarrel!'

'Just so, sir–that's what I said. It's a difference, and a difference can't never grow to be a quarrel if you just toss for it.'

'There 's our Solomon!' said Hoole. 'Spin up, Trentham!'

The rising moon gave light enough. Trentham spun a shilling.

'Heads!' Hoole called.

'Tails it is! That's settled!'

'"Tis fate: you can't go agen it,' murmured Meek.

'Those fellows must be pretty tired, drumming away like that,' said Trentham. 'But we had better make a start, Grinson. I think we ought to take our biscuits and water: they 'll last us a day or two, and we don't know what chances of getting food there 'll be on the cliff. You and Meek fetch them along. We 'll wait for you here.'

'They took it well,' said Hoole, when the men had gone. 'I was afraid Meek would jib.'

'Meek 's all right,' responded Trentham. 'The British sailor-man has his weak points, but he 's not a funk.'

He began to stride up and down with his hands in his pockets. Hoole watched him for half a minute or so, then said:

'You 'd better take my revolver.'

'Why in the world?' said Trentham, swinging round on him.

'It may be useful–last resource, you know.'

'If we can't do without that—- Why, man, a shot would absolutely dish us, would be heard for miles, and bring up every cannibal there is. This job has got to be done quietly.'

'I reckon there 'll be a pretty big row when they miss their supper. Well, if you won't take it, remember I 've got it, anyway.'

Some fifteen minutes later the four men, in single file, were stealing along the inner edge of the beach, close against the cliffs. Trentham, who was leading, took a zigzag course for the sake of cover from the scattered rocks and patches of vegetation. The seamen in the rear had slung the provisions about their shoulders with lashings from the boat, and on their account Trentham set a slower pace than his anxiety to be in time would otherwise have commended. The fire was burning more brightly, whiffs of acrid smoke were borne on the breeze, and the moon, about ten days old, appeared to have reached its greatest altitude, and was accentuating every irregularity on the face of the cliffs.

As they drew nearer to the fire, Trentham moved still more slowly, picking his way with care. Now and then some small animal, with a whisk and a rustle, scurried away in the undergrowth. Once Meek, who bore the keg, tripped over what he declared was a monster crab, and fell forward, the keg hitting a rock with a sharp crack. The rest halted and held their breath; had the sound been heard by the savages? The monotonous drumming continued unbroken, and they went on.

Between the fire and the cleft that was their destination, grew the tangled vegetation in which Hoole had discovered the track of footsteps. It grew higher than their heads, and they were able to enter it without much risk of being observed. A few whispered words were exchanged between Trentham and Hoole, then the latter led the seamen towards the chimney, which stretched upwards

like a black streak in the moonlit precipice, while Trentham struck to the left, and crept cautiously towards the outer edge of the bushes, where he could look out upon the festive scene.

His heart seemed to be making more noise than the drums. His lips were dry. The skin of his face felt tight. 'Nerves!' he thought, with angry impatience. It was strange how, without the slightest consciousness of fear, his mental realisation of all that was at stake thus affected his body. Taking a grip of himself, he went forward and peered through the stiff crinkled foliage. For a few moments he saw nothing but the glare of the fire; then, as he gathered self-command, he was able to take in details which he had missed at his view a short while before.

The dancers were still swaying to and fro. At one side, crouched on the sand, were two men holding in one hand an object like a huge dice-box, and with the other beating a skin, as he supposed, stretched across the circular end. At the other side, near the fire, stood two iron cooking-pots. Beyond, in the same place, lay the motionless white figure. Everything was clearly illuminated by the flames, and Trentham wondered, with a feeling of despair, how it would be possible to approach the prisoner unseen.

A few minutes after his arrival, the dance and the drumming came to an abrupt end. In the ensuing silence he heard the wash of the waves beyond the wreck, and a strange squealing grunt which, until then, had been drowned by the deep tones of the drums and the barking cries of the men. One of the savages, who wore a tall feathered headdress, glanced up at the moon, and said a few words to the others. All of them squatted on the sand except two, who went to the bush, some twenty yards away, to which the prisoner was bound. Trentham's blood ran cold. He wished he had brought Hoole's revolver, for it seemed that nothing else could save the helpless man, and he was on the point of shouting for Hoole, when a piercing squeal, such as no human being ever uttered, gave him at once a shock and a sense of relief. Next moment the savages returned towards the fire, one of them carrying the body of a small pig.

Trentham almost laughed as the tension of the last few moments was relaxed. The men were not cannibals after all! He looked on as in a dream while one of the men cut up the animal, and the other raked over the fire with a spear. But with reflection his former anxiety came back. Why had the savages brought their prisoner here? To leave him to be drowned? But he was far above high-water mark. Were they reserving him as the *bonne bouche* of their feast?

One of the cooking-pots was placed over the fire, and the dismembered pig was thrown into it. Beyond, the savages squatted in a half-circle, talking. Their leader raised an arm towards the moon, and then jerked it in the direction of the prisoner. The gestures made things clear to Trentham. The moon had not gained an altitude which cannibal superstition required for the slaying of a man.

Trentham felt himself flush with hope. The savages had their faces towards him, their backs towards the prisoner. The raking of the fire had dulled the flames, and the cooking-pot partly obscured the glowing embers. There was still time.

He crept through the bushes until he had almost encircled the space upon which the savages had built their fire. Then, however, a gap of clear sand, twenty or thirty yards wide, separated him from the bush where the prisoner lay. Was it possible to cross that gap undiscovered? No friendly cloud obscured the moon; if one of the savages chanced to turn, he could not fail to see the moving figure.

Trentham looked around him. There was no cover on that stretch of sand–no bush, no bank of seaweed, no wave-cast log. But the surface was a little uneven; the winds had blown up slight mounds and hollowed shallow troughs. White-clad as he was, the white was stained and toned by water and exposure, he might perhaps crawl through the depressions without attracting attention. But it must be at a snail's pace, inch by inch, flat as a worm.

He lay on all-fours, waited a moment or two, then started on his laborious progress. The mounds seemed higher, the troughs deeper, now that he was on their level, and the yielding sand helped to cover him, though at the same time it made movement difficult. Inch by inch he crawled on, stopping at every yard to listen; he dared not raise his head to look. The savages were still jabbering. Every now and then the dull glow of the fire was brightened by a flicker, at which he lay still as a log, moving on again when the transient flame had died down.

Thus, after exertion more exhausting than if he had run a mile, he came round to the rear of the bush to which the prisoner was bound. The foliage was thin and withered. Raising himself on his knees, he saw that he could easily reach through the branches and cut the man's bonds. Would his sudden action alarm the prisoner–perhaps cause him to cry out? The man, as he could see now, had been placed face downwards, and was tied to the central stem. He was very still. Perhaps rescue was already too late. But no! As Trentham gazed, he discerned a slight movement of the head; it was as though the prisoner sought easier breathing. The moonlight revealed a bald crown and heavily bearded cheeks; it was certainly not Grimshaw, the planter who had been Trentham's fellow-passenger on the *Berenisa*.

Trentham was still undecided whether to risk a preliminary warning, when the movements of the savages showed that the critical moment had come. The cooking-pot had been removed from the embers and set before the leader, who plunged his hand into it, took out a small joint, and with a hollow, wailing cry flung it into the air in the direction of the moon, the other men chanting a weird chorus. Then they sprang up, gathered about the pot, and began to eat, with horrid sounds of gobbling.

'Now 's the time!' thought Trentham. Stretching forward the hand in

which he held his open knife, he cut through the tendrils about the prisoner's arms and feet, and the longer strands which attached him to the bush, whispering a single word of caution. For a few moments the man lay almost as still as before, but Trentham saw that he was stretching his limbs and raising his head to look towards the fire, from which there came now only the faintest gleam. Then slowly, almost imperceptibly, he crawled backward through the bush. Trentham rose to his feet. When the man reached him, he took him by the hand and helped him to rise, then led him with cautious steps, under cover of the bush, down the beach towards the spot where the wreck in its sandy bed stood up slightly from its surroundings.

[image]

'NOW 'S THE TIME!'

Edging round this, the two men crouched below the level of the savages' heads, and in silence, one step at a time, moved along parallel with the sea-line, until they arrived at the outlying edge of the bushes which stretched up towards the foot of the chimney. Here they rose erect and quickened their pace. They were half-way to the cliffs when there was a sound of crackling. Looking over his shoulder, Trentham saw one of the savages in the act of throwing more fuel upon the fire, which suddenly broke into a bright flame. Immediately afterwards the air rang with a blood-curdling yell, and the whole troop of savages rushed towards the bush where they had left their prisoner, and swept round it in the direction of the sea.

Trentham hurried on. Panting heavily, the prisoner followed on his heels. At the foot of the chimney Hoole was waiting.

'The men are up–all's clear,' he said, flashing a look at the stranger, whose face was pallid and ghastly in the moonlight. 'Guess he 's about done,' he thought, and wondered whether his strength would hold out. 'You go first, Trentham; I 'll cover the rear.'

Trentham entered the narrow fissure, set a foot in the lowest notch, and, levering his back against the opposite wall, began to climb. The stranger, who had spoken no word, followed with nervous haste, so quickly that at the second step his head touched Trentham's boot.

'Steady! Steady!' Hoole called up in a loud whisper. 'One slip, and you 're done!'

The man paid no heed. He seemed to feel that he was on the verge of exhaustion, and must attain that giddy height while there was yet time. Hoole

watched him anxiously; it would hardly be safe to follow until the man had reached the top, yet the savages were returning. He heard their yells of rage, and presently caught sight of them running up the beach in a scattered line. A few moments later a ferocious shriek proclaimed that one of them at least had espied the men climbing.

'I must chance it,' thought Hoole. 'He 's a heavy chap–if he falls.'

With the speed acquired in mountaineering, he was soon on the heels of the rescued prisoner, whose quick pants alarmed him. About sixty feet from the base the man gave a long gasp and stopped. Hoole stuck his feet firmly, bent his head, and presented an arched back. At that moment he heard a sharp whizzing sound. The man grunted, and began to climb again. Hoole followed. Something flew with a hiss past his ear, and clicked against the wall.

'Arrows!' he thought. 'I wonder what their range is.'

Up and up, foot by foot, arrows whizzing and clicking, the savages yelling with ever-increasing fury, and audible through it all the laboured breathing of the man above. Then the shooting suddenly ceased; one tremendous yell, then silence. Hoole guessed that the savages had begun to climb. But he was now a hundred feet above them; if the stranger's strength held out, they would never recover the start. Their bare feet made no sound as they clambered up; the fissure was too narrow for him to see them. Once more the stranger stopped for breath, and when Hoole stopped also, a shout of triumph, immensely loud in the narrow passage, announced that the savages were gaining. The sound seemed to give their victim new strength; he clambered more quickly than before. Presently Hoole heard Trentham's voice quietly giving encouragement. Then, looking up, he saw the man hauled over the edge, and five seconds later his shoulders were grasped by Grinson's brawny hands, and he lay among thick grass.

[image]

UP AND UP, FOOT BY FOOT, ARROWS WHIZZING AND CLICKING.

'Just saved your bacon, mister,' he said to the man beside him.

The stranger brushed the sweat from his pallid brow with his sleeve, uttered an inarticulate grunt, then fell backwards fainting.

'Batten down, Ephraim, me lad!' cried Grinson.

The seamen had turned to good account the hour they had spent alone on the cliff top. With ready resource they had cut down pliant branches from the surrounding trees, torn up saplings by the roots, and begun to construct a hurdle

large enough to cover the opening. It was unfinished, but as soon as Hoole had reached the top they threw it across the gap, and hastily piled upon it the material still unused. The leading native, arriving half a minute later, found his egress blocked by this criss-cross of trunks and branches, which yielded only slightly to the butting of his head. Meanwhile, Hoole and Trentham were tearing down more branches, and casting them upon the heap, which quickly grew to such a size that Goliath himself could not have raised it.

From beneath it rose the muffled cries of the savages. Then all was silent.

CHAPTER IV
MR. HAAN

'Sprinkle a little water on his face, Meek,' said Trentham, indicating the rescued prisoner, who lay unconscious where he had fallen. 'Only a little–we have none to spare.'

'Tickle his nose,' suggested Hoole. 'Trentham, I 'll take a look round; we may be on the edge of a hornets' nest.'

'Don't lose yourself, man. In fact, you 'd better not go out of sight. It mayn't be safe to call to each other.'

The rays of the moon, now high over the sea, lit up their immediate surroundings. From the cliff edge to an irregular row of palms a few yards back, low-growing plants carpeted the ground. On one side of the chimney they were trodden down, and a faintly marked track was discernible until it disappeared among the trees. No sound broke the stillness except the wash of the surf two hundred feet below, and an occasional deep booming note from some distant spot in the forest, which Trentham identified as the call of the cassowary.

'"Saved his bacon!" Mr. Hoole said: 'tis a true word,' remarked Grinson. 'Which I mean to say, you saved him from being turned into bacon, sir–or ham. He 'd have cut up very well.'

He stood at Trentham's side, looking down at the man whom Meek was trying to restore to consciousness–a brawny figure, clad in duck trousers and a white flannel shirt, with a linen collar and a blue tie. His features were heavy, his skin was deeply browned. The crown of his head was almost entirely bald, but a thick growth of short brown hair clothed his lips, cheeks, and chin.

'The very picter of Captain Lew Summers as once I sailed with,' Grinson

went on. 'How 'd he get in this mess, sir?'

'I don't know,' replied Trentham. 'He hasn't said a word.'

He thought he saw the man's eyelids flicker.

'He 's coming to, sir,' said Meek, from the ground.

'Lift his head, Ephraim,' said Grinson. 'I 'm speckylating whether his first word 'll be a curse or a blessing.'

The man slowly opened his eyes, but it seemed to Trentham, watching him intently, that he had more command over himself than might have been expected in a man recovering from a swoon. He glanced from Meek to Grinson, then to Trentham, and raising himself on his elbows looked along the track that led among the trees.

'Feel better?' asked Trentham.

[image]

'FEEL BETTER?'

For a moment he did not reply; then slowly and with a curiously thick utterance, he said:–

'Yes. You save me? Dank you.

'Not at all. Couldn't leave a white man in the hands of niggers, you know. Can you get up?'

'I dink so.' With Trentham's assistance he struggled to his feet. 'Yes. Widout you I am killed–and eat! Ach!'

'You are not an Englishman?'

'Dutch. Mate of a trade schooner dat was wrecked up de coast.'

'And the rest of the crew?'

'Dead–dead; all but me. I swim strong.'

Grinson glanced at the Dutchman's trousers, then at Meek.

'Yes, but what good?' the man went on. 'De niggers capture me. Widout you, my friend–Ach! Dey make me climb down; at de height of de moon'–(he shuddered). 'Yes, I know dem, widout you I am killed and eat. I dank you.'

'Well, it was uncommonly lucky we happened to be hereabouts,' said Trentham. 'We were in a ticklish situation ourselves.'

'Wrecked?'

The moonlight glinted on a pair of very keen eyes.

'No, we were sunk by a German raider. The boat we got away in, four of us, only escaped a shell by a hair's breadth. Did you sight the ruffians?'

'No. My schooner was wrecked up de coast. You escaped a shell! Wonder-

ful! And you go, where?'

'We don't know. We only got ashore yesterday, and couldn't find a way up the cliffs till we discovered this crack.'

'I help you. Yes, it is a pleasure to do something for dem what save me. Dis coast, I know it a little. I was here before, since ten years, when I come wid expedition for search of–of copper. You listen to me; I show you. You go to Friedrich Wilhelmshafen; it is de German port—-'

'Axing your pardon, mister,' Grinson interposed, 'you been a long voyage, surely. There ain't no German ports in New Guinea nowadays, and I lay that port have got a new name that don't break your jaw to say.'

The stranger turned his eyes on Grinson for a moment, then went on:

'It is a long way–a journey of eight or ten days. I show you. Dere is needed great care. De niggers–cannibals–you see dem. Always must we watch, and wid luck–I say wid luck–we do not fall into deir hands. Dey have villages along de coast–de coast is very dangerous, and we must go drough de forest.'

'Aren't there villages in the forest?' asked Trentham.

'In de mountains, yes,' said the Dutchman, waving an arm towards the interior. 'De coast and de mountains, dey must we avoid equally.'

'And the niggers on the beach there–where is their village?'

'On de coast somewhere, I know not where. Dey carry me far from de place where I was wrecked–five days.'

'I 'm glad of that. I mean I 'm glad we aren't near their place; it gives us a better chance. Ah! here 's the fourth of our party.'

Hoole had just reappeared at the edge of forest. 'My name is Trentham, by the way; my friend yonder is Mr. Hoole; these friends of ours, men of your own calling, are Mr. Grinson and Mr. Meek.'

'Yes. My name is Haan–H-a-a-n.'

Wondering why he had spelled the name, Trentham turned to Hoole, who had just come up.

'I followed the track some distance,' said Hoole. 'Nothing doing, except that a fiendish leech dropped on me from a tree, I suppose, and did himself rather well, confound him!' He showed his wrist. 'The beast has opened a vein, and I knew nothing about it until I got back into the moonlight and wondered how on earth I 'd cut my wrist. But there 's no sign of natives.'

Meek heaved a sign of satisfaction. Having introduced the Dutchman and explained his plight, Trentham went on:

'I think we had better get out of this at once. We haven't heard a sound from below, which suggests–doesn't it?–that the savages know another way up, probably far away. The track must lead to their village, so we 'll avoid that. Mr. Haan knows something of the country, and has offered to guide us to–what is

it?'

'Friedrich Wilhelmshafen,' said Haan.

'A reg'lar tongue-twister, sir,' said Grinson. 'But it 'll change its name, like a woman, for better–couldn't be for worse!'

'Do we strike east or west?' asked Hoole.

'East,' replied Haan. 'I dink we should go an hour or two while the moon is up, den rest till morning.'

'Are there any beasts of the earth that do go forth and seek their prey by night?' asked Meek.

'Not in dis country,' the Dutchman answered. 'Dere are no dangerous beasts except de cannibals, and dey will not walk when the moon is down. We go, den; I show de way.'

Haan gazed into the sky, then went to the brink of the cliff and looked out to sea and along the coast in both directions.

'I take my bearings,' he said, returning. 'Now we start.'

He struck off almost at right angles to the native track, but instead of entering the forest strode along at a moderate pace just outside its edge, at an average distance of thirty feet from the cliff. The rest followed him in single file, Trentham leading, Meek bringing up the rear. They had taken only a few steps when Grinson halted until Meek reached his side.

'Trousers!' he said in a falsetto whisper.

'What did you say, Mr. Grinson?' asked Meek, dropping his voice to match.

'Trousers, Ephraim–the Dutchman's. Didn't you notice 'em?'

'Well, he do have a pair, as is only decent, but I can't truthfully say as I noticed anything partickler about their rig.'

'Where are your eyes, Ephraim? I 'm surprised at you! He said he swam ashore.'

'True. "I swim strong," was his words, and I can believe it, his arms and legs being such.'

'D' you believe he took his trousers off, then? S'pose he did–wouldn't they show? If you 'd used your eyes, Ephraim, me lad, you 'd 'a seen as there weren't no sign of sea-water on them trousers. 'Tis my belief they 've never been near water since they left the washtub.'

Meek looked in a puzzled way into the boatswain's eyes. Grinson winked, jerked his arm in the direction of the Dutchman, then, edging a little closer to Meek, put his head over his mouth, and whispered:

'Cut the painter.'

'What painter?'

'Hopped the twig, as they say in the dear old New Cut where I was born. Deserted, Ephraim.'

'Never!' Meek ejaculated. 'What for would he desert in a land of cannibals?'

'What do men desert for? Anything–nothing! You mind that time Ben Scruddles hooked it at Noo York? What for?'

'Well, 'twas a long time ago, and I don't rightly remember, but I 'd say 'twas because Ben didn't like the skipper's red hair.'

'Might 'a been part of it, but the main thing was that Ben was just tired–tired o' the skipper, tired o' reg'lar hours and ever-lasting dooty, tired of every blessed thing–like a horse as jibs and swears he won't pull the blessed cart another blessed inch. Anything for a change. I lay my life the Dutchman got it bad, and fancied a change. Cannibals is nothing when you feel like that; I 've felt like it myself.'

They had lagged while talking, and Hoole, looking over his shoulder, called:

'Now, men, keep up! We don't want to lose you. The moon 's going down.'

'Ay, ay, sir!' replied Grinson, in his usual bellow. 'Ephraim was talking, and he never could do two things at wunst.'

Haan meanwhile had trudged steadily on, making his path through the undergrowth that skirted the forest. The rankness of the vegetation and the uneven surface of the ground made progress very slow. It seemed to Trentham easier going near the cliff edge, where the plants were less tall; but when he made the suggestion, Haan at once rejected it.

'We go safer out of sight from de sea,' he said.

Only the swishing of their feet, a rustle as some small animal was disturbed, now and then a squeal from among the trees, broke the deep silence of the tropical night. The air was chill, but walking kept the men pleasantly warm. Gradually the moon stole down the sky behind them, and when it had disappeared Haan called a halt.

'Now we rest,' he said. 'In morning we go into de forest, until we see a hill; seamen call it Mushroom Hill, because it look like one when dey see it from de sea. When we see it, we go quicker.'

The sailors dropped their burdens, and beat down the vegetation over a space some twelve feet square. Here they all stretched themselves, and made a frugal supper. Haan helped himself to biscuits more often than Grinson liked. For a while the boatswain said nothing; at last, however, drawing the mouth of the bag together, he ventured:

'Beg pardon, sir–'twas eight days, I think you said, to the port we 're making for?'

'Yes, eight or nine,' replied Haan.

Grinson pressed down the loose end of the bag, and, exhibiting the bulk, said:

'Biscuits won't last three, Mr. Trentham, and short rations at that.'

'We get food in de forest–plenty,' said Haan.

'I 'm glad to hear that,' said Trentham. 'This one bag was all that we had time to snatch up when we took to the boat. The old piracy was gentlemanly compared with the new. As a seaman, Mr. Haan, you must feel pretty much disgusted at the dirty tricks the Germans are playing.'

'It is war,' said Haan, with a shrug. 'De ways of war, like everyding else, dey change.'

'They do indeed!' cried Trentham. 'In the old days you could fight and then shake hands; but I 'm hanged if anybody will ever want to shake hands with a German after all this devilry!'

'That's sure!' said Hoole. 'Take me for one. I 'm a citizen of the United States, and war 's not precisely our trade; but after what I 've seen, I 'm going to take a hand, if any one will have me–and I get clear of this New Guinea.'

'And I was on my way to join up,' added Trentham. 'The Raider has only made me extra keen.'

Haan grunted, and changed the subject by suggesting that they should take turns in watching through the remaining hours of the night. They were not near a village, he thought, but it was as well to adopt precautions in a land where enemies might lurk in every bush. Trentham proposed that the seamen, having loads to carry, should be let off, and it was in fact arranged that the guard should be shared by Hoole, Haan, and himself. Each would have about an hour's duty.

They were not disturbed. As soon as dawn streaked the sky they were afoot. Haan, after a preliminary scanning of the sea and as much of the coastline as was visible, plunged among the trees, followed in single file by the rest. Birds chattered with shrill cries from tree and bush, and in the half light shadowy forms darted up the trunks. Under foot all was damp; moisture dripped from every leaf, and the air was full of the odour of rotting vegetation.

'Hadn't we better stick to the cliff?' asked Trentham, dismayed at the prospect of hours of toilsome march in such an atmosphere and with twining plants clogging their steps.

'De coast winds–we save miles and miles,' said Haan briefly.

Trentham could only defer to his guide's judgment, but he felt anxious, ill at ease. He took little heed of the strange scenes through which he was passing–the graceful palms, the fantastic screw pines, trees propped on aerial roots, trees surrounded by natural buttresses springing from the trunk twenty feet above the ground. He had no eye for the orchids festooned from tree to tree, or the gorgeous blooms that hung from branches high above his head. Many-hued parrots, white cockatoos, birds of paradise, tree kangaroos, all were barely noticed, so much preoccupied was he with troublous thought. How could Haan find his way

through the trackless forest? What defence had they against the natives whom they were sure to meet sooner or later? Could they survive a week's travelling and camping in an atmosphere so fetid and unhealthy?

But he kept his thoughts to himself, and even gave a reassuring nod to Grinson, when the boatswain murmured that he saw no sign of food.

'Mr. Haan told us he had been in these parts before,' he said. 'We must trust him.'

As they penetrated deeper into the forest the undergrowth became more and more dense, and the order of their going was sometimes altered, each seeking his own path. It usually happened that Haan assumed his place as leader very quickly; but once, when Trentham and Hoole together had forced their way through a mass of tangled vegetation, they found that they had lost touch with him. To their surprise, they had emerged into a comparatively clear space, beyond which they caught sight of the sea, a dark motionless plain under a leaden sky. The beach was hidden from them, but in front and to the left stretched the rugged contours of the cliffs, while to the right, behind the trees, rose the tops of lofty hills.

They were about to call for Haan, when Hoole's eye was arrested by a cloud of smoke rising from beyond the edge of the cliff.

'By gum, Trentham!' he exclaimed. 'Is there a steamer below there? Let's have a look!'

They went a few paces forward, and had just caught sight of a number of dark figures moving up and down what appeared to be a steep slope, perhaps a mile away, near the cloud, when Haan came panting up behind them, and unceremoniously pulled them back.

'Shust in time!' he said in a husky whisper, rapidly, with every sign of agitation. 'Vy–vy–vy did you leave me? You vill ruin every zing!'

'Sorry!' said Trentham, as the man continued to draw them back. 'What's the matter?'

'Shust in time!' repeated the Dutchman, as if to himself; then, aloud, and with his former slow, careful utterance: 'Dere, between us and dat place, is de village of dose niggers what capture me.'

'That accounts for the smoke,' remarked Hoole. 'We 've escaped making a bad bloomer, seemingly.'

'My word, shust in time!' said Haan. 'If I had not come! Dose niggers–you saw dem–wild men, noding can tame dem, cannibals, ferocious–if dey had seen us, dere would soon be noding of us but our bones. Never, never leave me again!'

'It was quite accidental, Mr. Haan,' said Trentham. 'The bush was so thick—-'

'Yes, yes,' said the man impatiently, 'but we gain no time going separate. I

lead, you follow–remember dat!'

Trentham was inclined to resent a certain peremptoriness in the Dutchman's tone, but, catching Hoole's eye, he held his peace.

'He 's a bit unstrung,' whispered Hoole, as they returned to the spot where Haan had left the seamen, 'and I don't wonder. He doesn't want to fall into their clutches a second time.'

Haan quickly recovered his equanimity, and for nearly two hours they plodded on through the forest, keeping, apparently, the coast behind them. Then suddenly, through a break in the trees, the expected landmark loomed up on their left hand.

'Dat is Mushroom Hill,' said Haan. 'We now go quicker. We go round de hill on de north side, and go quicker still–and safer. De niggers on de oder side are not so fierce; dey do not eat men. Why? Dey are nearer Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, and dey have felt de weight of de German hand.'

'Poor devils!' said Trentham involuntarily, and surprised a strange look that gleamed for an instant in the Dutchman's eyes.

'Say, how far away is that hill of yours, Mr. Haan?' asked Hoole.

'Forty miles. We take dree days.'

'Well, I guess we 'll take a little food first. We shall have to rely on our biscuits; we haven't happened on any orchards yet.'

'Plenty bread-fruit yonder,' said Haan, waving his arm towards the hill, 'and coco-palms, and pawpaws. Yes, we eat our lunch and rest. De sun is bursting drough; it will be very hot. Last night we sleep little. A nap–forty vinks you call it–will refresh us, den we go stronger.'

'A capital idea!' said Trentham. 'I say, Mr. Haan, it was lucky you found us when you did.'

'Yes,' said Haan drily. 'But we must still be on guard. We must not all sleep togeder.'

'Of course not. We 'll take turns again–we three. Let the men off. They have the hardest job, though their loads will be lighter when we start again. I 'll take first watch, then you, Hoole. Mr. Haan must be more tired than we two.'

'It is no matter,' remarked Haan, 'and I am used to a hard life. I can stand fatigue better than you two young gentlemen. But certainly I can sleep wid pleasure. Two hours–dat will give forty minutes each. Yes; and I haf no watch; de niggers strip off my coat. You wake me, Mr. Hoole, and lend me your watch, so I wake you; and I give you no more dan forty minutes–not one second.'

He laughed in a clumsily roguish way. They cleared a space and sat down to their meal of biscuits and water. Haan was the first to throw himself on his back, his bald head shaded by the spreading candelabra-like branches of a screw pine. The rest were not slaw to follow his example, except Trentham, who sat on

the keg, and lit a cigarette to keep himself awake.

Eighty minutes later Hoole, having completed his spell of watching, touched Haan lightly on the shoulder. The man did not stir. He tickled his ear with a spray of some feathery plant; Haan slept on.

'I 'll give him another five minutes,' thought Hoole, yawning.

At the end of that time, by dint of poking Haan in the ribs and pinching his nose, he succeeded in waking the Dutchman.

'Awfully sorry!' he said, 'but I can scarcely keep my eyes open. Here 's my watch; be sure and not let me oversleep.'

Haan got up. His movements were slow and clumsy, but his eyes were keen and alert.

'Forty minutes, Mr. Hoole,' he said with a smile. 'Not a second more.'

He did not sit on the keg as Hoole and Trentham had done, but posted himself a few paces from the rest of the party, at a spot where the ground rose slightly. Hoole, just before he closed his eyes, saw the stout figure pacing slowly up and down.

Rather more than two hours afterwards Meek, in his sleep, threw out his left leg, and dealt Grinson, who lay at his side, a smart kick on the shin.

'Belay, there!' shouted Grinson, starting up. 'What swab–what dirty lubber—-'

'"Twas a nightmare, Mr. Grinson,' said Meek penitently. 'I dreamt as a kangaroo was a-coming to peck me, and—-'

'Peck you! A goose might—-'

He paused and looked around. Hoole and Trentham were a few yards away, fast asleep. Haan was not in sight.

'Whose watch is this, Ephraim?' asked Grinson.

'I can't rightly say, but seeing as the two gentlemen be asleep, I can't help thinking 'tis the Dutchman's.'

Grinson got up.

'If so be he was a landsman,' he said, 'he might be doing a beat like a bobby; but a seaman ought to know better.'

He walked to the left, then to the right, followed by Meek.

'Can't see the chap, nor hear him. What d' you make of it, Ephraim?'

'He can't have fell overboard–must have strayed. Give him a hail with your powerful voice, Mr. Grinson. Save us all! I forgot the cannibals! Don't holler, for mercy's sake!'

'I nearly did, but you 're right, Ephraim. I 'll report to the skipper, which I mean Mr. Trentham.'

'Eh–what? The Dutchman absent from his post?' said Trentham sleepily, when Grinson had roused him. 'Hoole, wake up!'

'Sure I haven't been asleep forty minutes yet,' said Hoole. 'And I gave Haan five minutes extra.'

'Where *is* Haan?'

'Where is he? He was over there.'

'Grinson says he 's missing.'

'Missing! But—-' He felt for his watch. 'What's the time? I lent him my watch.'

'Ten past four.'

'What?'

Trentham showed him his watch.

'Ten past four! It was two when I gave it him! What the deuce—-'

He stopped, and stared blankly at Trentham.

'What did I say, Ephraim, me lad?' said Grinson, in what he intended for a whisper.

'What's that, Grinson?' demanded Trentham. 'What *did* you say?'

'Well, sir, as we come along, Meek and me was saying a few things about the Dutchman's trousers, and seeing as they 'd no mark of being in sea-water, it come into my head that he didn't get ashore swimming. And from that–which I know the little ways o' seamen–I somehow couldn't help guessing that he might 'a got restless like, and hopped the twig.'

'Deserted his ship, sir,' explained Meek.

'Got a bit wild like, and gone a-roaming,' added Grinson. 'Seemingly he's got it again.'

'Nonsense!' exclaimed Trentham. 'He isn't an ass!'

'Guess we 'd better look for him,' said Hoole. 'He 's got my watch.'

CHAPTER V
IN THE TOILS

Trentham looked round. Mushroom Hill reared its strange form into the sky on their left hand–forty miles away, Haan had said. Between it and them stretched unbroken forest, an undulating sea of green. There was forest on their right, in front, behind.

'It's like looking for the proverbial needle in the bundle of hay,' he said.

'But we might track him through the undergrowth,' suggested Hoole. 'He

couldn't pass without leaving traces–a big fellow, with big boots.'

'Yes; a solid-looking fellow, too; not the kind of man to do anything so mad as Grinson suggests.'

'Ah, sir, 'tis them as are the worst when the feeling gets a hold,' said Grinson. 'There was once a messmate o' mine, Job Grindle by name—-'

'Really we must lose no time,' Trentham interrupted. 'The sun will be down in two hours or less. He was on that side, Hoole? Then let us start from there, and all keep together.'

They examined the slight eminence where Hoole had last seen the Dutchman. The plants were beaten down over a space of a few yards, where the man had walked to and fro; but beyond this narrow area there was no sign of footsteps in any direction.

'Very odd,' said Trentham. 'He must have gone back the way we came.'

They retraced their steps towards the clearly marked track of their course through the forest.

'"Tis my belief the cannibals come up and cotched him again,' said Meek.

'But they must have passed us before they reached him,' said Trentham. 'He would have sung out.'

'And even if they took him by surprise a big fellow like him wouldn't have been overpowered without a struggle,' added Hoole. 'There 's no sign of it. And they would hardly have been satisfied with one victim when they might have had five. I guess Grinson is right, after all. Now let us look at the proposition from that point of view. Say that Haan was seized with the roaming fever–that is, was more or less mad. There's a deal of cunning in madmen, and he 'd naturally try to cover up his tracks. He would expect us to go back over our course, so that's the very way he wouldn't go. What do you say?'

'It sounds reasonable, but where are his tracks? How could he cover them?'

'Let's go back to where I last saw him. I have an idea.'

Retracing their steps to the rising ground, they examined once more the few yards which Haan had trodden. Beyond this clear space trees of various species grew somewhat thickly together. Hoole went up to them and began to look closely at the trunks.

'Ah, maybe he 's sitting up aloft a-grinning at us,' said Grinson, peering up into the foliage–'for a joke, like.'

'I never could understand a joke,' murmured Meek.

'Here you are,' cried Hoole, laying his hand on a twisted and knobby trunk. 'He shinned up here.'

There were on the bark scratches that might have been made by nails in a heavy sole. But Haan was not discoverable amid the leaves above.

'The madman!' exclaimed Trentham.

'With a madman's cunning,' said Hoole. 'Clearly he wanted to throw us off, and he deserves to be left to his fate. But, of course, we can't leave him to his fate. I suppose he went from tree to tree, and then dropped to earth again when he thought he had done us. It would be a hopeless job to attempt to track him through the foliage; but we know the direction in which he went, and I dare say we 'll find his traces not far away. Let us go on; scatter a little; the forest isn't thick hereabouts, and we can see each other a few yards apart. If we don't find him by nightfall, we shall simply have to give it up, camp for the night, and then make tracks for Mushroom Hill.'

Following his suggestion, they went forward in a line, looking up into the foliage, and closely examining the undergrowth for signs of its having been trampled down. Every now and then they stopped to listen; they dared not shout, but Hoole sometimes ventured upon a low whistle.

After they had progressed slowly for about half an hour, Meek suddenly sniffed, and caught Grinson by the arm.

'Summat burning, Mr. Grinson,' he said.

'Well, you 've a long nose, Ephraim. You 're right, me lad; I smell it myself.' He coughed lightly to attract the attention of Trentham, a few yards on his right. The four men grouped themselves. Hoole took out his revolver. They stood in silence, listening, looking in the direction from which the smell of burning came. There was no sound of crackling, no sign of smoke, and after a minute or two they went forward cautiously.

Soon they halted in astonishment. They had come upon a stretch of blackened undergrowth, upon which lay a few trees that bore the mark of an axe; others, still erect, were black for many feet from their base. The air was full of the smell of burnt wood.

'Surely the madman didn't set fire to the trees?' said Trentham.

'This wasn't done to-day,' said Hoole, touching a blackened trunk. 'It's not hot. But it wasn't long ago. Look here; the remains of a ladder.'

He had picked up at the foot of a tree what was clearly the charred remnant of a ladder of bamboo.

'Bless my eyes, sir, 'tis a village,' said Grinson. 'When I was at Moresby some years ago they showed me a photograph of one–a tree village, the little houses perched up aloft, and ladders to get to 'em. There 's been a fire, that's clear.'

'And no fire-engine,' said Meek. 'A terrible calamity, to be sure.'

Hoole had gone a few steps ahead.

'Here 's the sea,' he called. 'We 're on the edge of a cliff. And by Jove! Trentham, look here!'

The others went forward and joined him. They looked down upon a narrow

ravine–a steep valley such as is called a chine in the South of England. At the foot of the thickly wooded banks a stream flowed out into a small bay almost landlocked by high cliffs. And in the middle of the bay lay a vessel–a long blue shape with a single funnel.

'The Raider!' ejaculated Grinson with an oath.

[image]

'THE RAIDER!'

'I guess you 're right,' said Hoole quietly. 'And there 's that cloud of smoke we saw in the distance this morning.'

A slight dark cloud was rising above the cliff near the vessel. It did not proceed from the Raider's funnel. Was it possible that a consort of hers lay beyond the point?

The four men, standing just within the forest verge, gazed for a few moments in silence at this unexpected scene. Then Trentham turned.

'We had better get back–to where we can see Mushroom Hill,' he said, a grave note in his voice.

'And give up Haan?' said Hoole.

'And give up Haan. Haan may go hang. Let us go at once; it 'll be dark soon.'

They retraced their steps through the burnt village, Hoole and Trentham walking side by side, the two seamen following.

'I wondered why the fellow spelt his name to us; you remember? H-a-a-n,' said Trentham. 'It's clear as daylight now. He 's a German; was on that raider; a petty officer, I suppose; his name 's Hahn.'

Hoole whistled under his breath.

'They played some devilry with the natives, I suppose,' Trentham went on; 'burnt their village, very likely; Hahn strayed and got collared–and we saved one of the ruffians who sunk us!'

'And he 's got away and rejoined–with my watch!' cried Hoole. 'What an almighty fool I was! And I gave him five minutes' extra sleep! That stings, Trentham, and will till my dying day.'

'He beat us: in slimness the Hun always will. I haven't a doubt he was playing tricks with us all the time. His Mushroom Hill–faugh!'

'You mean?'

'I mean that I don't believe that's our way at all. He reckoned on our getting hopelessly lost–starving–falling into the hands of the savages.'

'Well, for my part, I 'd as soon fall into their hands as the Germans'. You don't think he 'll send the Huns after us, then?'

'Not he! I don't suppose he 'll mention us, thinking us well out of the way. He 'll probably pitch some tall yarn about his clever escape from the cannibals–very likely write a book about it. Upon my word, Hoole, after what we know—-'

'Well, I reckon we 're done pretty brown, but I 'm not inclined to give him best. We 'll get to Friedrich What-do-you-call-it in spite of him, and not by Mushroom Hill either. We 'll stick to the coast–confound him! He was so precious careful to keep us away from it.'

'We can only try; it's a ticklish affair, Hoole.'

'I know it is, old son. The food question.'

'Don't worry about that. Where there are men there must be food.'

'That's true; but I 'd rather find the food where there weren't men, if the men are like those dancing hoodlums on the beach. One thing; the Hun's frightfulness has probably scared away all the natives from these parts, so we 'll be able to rest in peace to-night and start afresh in the morning.'

'I hope so. We had better camp where Hahn left us; I 'll tell the men there.'

They went on over their former tracks. A wind was rising, and the foliage overhead rustled like the hissing of breakers on a shingly beach. Conversation ceased; each was busy with his own uneasy thoughts. The rays of the setting sun filtered through the trees from behind them, and presently they came in sight of the open space where Hahn had deserted them. And then the two young men suddenly halted; Trentham wheeled round and put his fingers over his lips in sight of the seamen.

In the middle of the clearing, just where Grinson had lain, a dark, naked figure was stooping and closely examining the ground. He had his back to them, but a moment after they had stopped he sprang up suddenly and turned towards them, his head raised like that of a wild animal that scents danger. For a few moments he stood motionless in the full glow of the sunlight–a tall lithe figure, like a statue in bronze. His right hand clutched a spear.

The watchers had time to notice his well-proportioned form; his colour, lighter than that of the natives they had already seen; a grace of bearing that gave him an indefinable distinction; then he was gone, as if by magic. Where he had been he was no longer; it was as if he had dissolved like Pepper's ghost.

After waiting a little, Hoole stole forward to reconnoitre. The space was vacant; there was no sign of savages lurking among the surrounding trees. He returned to the others.

'No one there,' he said under his breath.

'D' you think he saw us?' asked Trentham.

'No. I couldn't see you from the edge. But he was uneasy.'

'So am I! We had better avoid that spot. I 'd rather not meet any more natives just yet! We had better go rather deeply into the forest, and perch up in trees for the night. There 's only about half an hour of daylight left; we shall probably be pretty safe in the dark. In daylight–well, we shall have to look out.'

They had spoken in whispers. The seamen had watched them anxiously; Grinson, usually talkative enough, had not uttered a word for some time. Trentham in a few sentences explained his plan; then led the way with Hoole into the forest, in a direction at right angles to their former course.

The dying sunlight scarcely penetrated the thick canopy above them. The greenish gloom lent pallor to their cheeks. They stumbled, on through the brushwood, which grew more densely where the overhead leafage was thin. The wind had dropped as suddenly as it had arisen. They heard nothing but the swish of their feet through the vegetation and the fitful calls of night birds just awaking. Presently, however, Hoole stopped and whispered:

'Did you hear that?'

'What?'

'Some sound–I don't know what.'

'I heard nothing.'

They went on.

'There again!' said Hoole, a few seconds later. He looked round apprehensively. A slight groan came from Meek.

'What's the matter?' asked Trentham in a whisper, sharply. His nerves were a little on edge.

'I seed a face, sir,' murmured the man, staring into the gloom.

'Nonsense! It's too dark to see anything. We 'll stop in a few minutes, when it's quite dark; but we must get as far as we can from where we saw that native.'

They had not advanced more than a dozen yards when Hoole made a sudden dash among the bushes. The rest halted, drawing quick breaths. He came back after half a minute's absence.

'I distinctly heard a sound there,' he explained. 'No; it's not jumpiness. But I couldn't see any one or anything. I vote we stop, Trentham. We shall lose our bearings utterly if we go too far into the forest, where we can't see the sun to-morrow.'

'I think you 're right. Now to find trees we can climb, and big enough to give us safe perches. Grinson, put down your bag and have a look round.'

The boatswain had just risen from stooping to the ground; the others were standing by, looking up for broad forks which promised security, when with a sudden *whish* that took them all aback the brushwood around them parted and a score or more of dusky natives burst into the ring. Before they could raise a finger in self-defence they were thrown headlong, and sinewy hands were knotting

pliant tendrils about their arms and legs, while others held them down. In a few minutes the binding was finished. The captors collected, and jabbered away among themselves. One of them had opened the bag, and was munching a biscuit. The bag was wrenched from his hands; and the four prisoners, lying on their backs, watched the gleeful savages consume their whole stock of provisions to the last crumb.

[image]

A SCORE OF DUSKY NATIVES BURST INTO THE RING.

CHAPTER VI
THE TOTEM

'They won't eat us now, will they, Mr. Grinson?' said Meek in a whisper, hopefully.

Grinson swore.

'Not after them biscuits, Mr. Grinson?' Meek persisted.

'Stow it, can't you?' growled Grinson. 'This ain't a time for jokes.'

Meek was so much astonished at being accused of joking that his jaw dropped, and he eyed the boatswain sadly. His expression turned to anguish as he listened to the low-toned conversation between Hoole and Trentham.

'We 're fairly in the cart,' said the former. 'See any way out?'

'No. We 're still alive. They might have killed us–those spears!'

'Better if they had, perhaps. Waiting is the deuce!'

'If we could only speak to them!'

'Try right now. Perhaps some of them know pidgin.'

'You boys belongina this place?' began Trentham in loud tones. 'You savvy English fella? English he like him black fella man too much, come this place look out black fella man, no fighting black fella man.'

The natives had stopped jabbering.

'You savvy all same what English fella man he say?' Trentham asked.

There was no answer. The Papuans, squatting in a line, gave an inarticulate grunt, then resumed their talk.

'No good!' said Trentham. 'They evidently haven't been to the ports. Very little chance for us with savages of the interior.'

'What are they waiting for, then? Look, that's the fellow we saw a while ago.'

The young native whom they had seen examining their tracks came out of the gloom, stood before the squatting men, and spoke to them. They stared at the four prisoners and grunted; the speaker disappeared among the trees.

'He 's left them on guard, and gone to report at headquarters,' said Trentham. 'A brief respite.'

'Till the rising of the moon, I suppose. Well, old boy, I hope it 'll be short–and both together.'

Trentham was silent. He had had many anxious moments since the Raider's first shell had flown screaming over the deck; but it was with a shock of a totally different kind that he now found himself looking with open eyes upon the imminence of death. To a man in health death is unrealisable. But he remembered those hideous figures on the beach, the pig's squeal, and he shuddered.

There was barely light enough to distinguish the savages from their surroundings; but it seemed to him, from their general appearance, that they were of the same tribe as the dancers–possibly they were the dancers themselves. In that case, baulked of one victim, they were only too likely to make the most of the four who had now fallen into their hands. It was not to be hoped that they would relax their watchfulness. Would their leader return at the rising of the moon?

Complete darkness enwrapped them. The blacks talked on endlessly, breaking at times into boisterous laughter.

'Have you tried the knots, Grinson?' Trentham asked.

'Did that first go off, sir,' replied the boatswain in doleful accents. 'I couldn't have tied 'em better myself.'

Each of the prisoners had in fact already wriggled and strained at his bonds, with total unsuccess.

They lay silent again. Presently Grinson let out a torrent of expletives with something like his old vigour. The others questioned him.

'Skeeters!' he cried furiously. 'They 're all over me, and I can't rub my nose.'

Hitherto insects had troubled them little, and the advent of mosquitoes was likely to enhance their physical discomfort.

'I guess we 're near water,' remarked Hoole; 'perhaps that stream we saw running into the bay. Have the mosquitoes bit you, Trentham?'

'Not yet.'

'Nor me. They 've taken a fancy for Grinson.'

'I 'm willing they should have a bite at me,' said Meek, 'if so be they 'd let Mr. Grinson alone.'

Grinson swore again; in his present mood Meek's devotion was only less irritating than the stabs of the insects.

A glint of moonlight stole through the trees, and revealed the faces of some of the natives–ugly faces of rusty black, daubed with red and white. The prisoners felt their heart-beats quicken. But though the moonbeams lengthened the savages made no move, nor did their leader return.

The hours dragged on. One after another the four men slumbered uneasily, waking with sudden starts and tremors, always to hear the harsh voices of their guards. Towards morning they slept heavily, and were only awakened by the touch of hands upon their legs. In the dim greenish light they saw that the savages had been rejoined by the young man who had left them in the evening, and by another native resembling him, but a good deal older, wearing a high plume of feathers. The bonds about the prisoners' legs were released; they were hauled to their feet, and the two leaders made signs that they were to march. So cramped that they could scarcely move their limbs, they followed their leaders; the Papuan guards, all armed with spears, tramping in single file behind them.

'Your poor face is all swollen, Mr. Grinson,' said Meek, with a look of commiseration.

'Shut *your* face!' growled the boatswain ill-temperedly.

With their arms still bound firmly to their sides, the prisoners, faint with hunger, stumbled through the forest, at the heels of the two leaders, along a well-worn track. It crossed deeply wooded ravines, shallow streams; wound round steep bluffs on which no trees grew. Presently they came to a wide clearing where naked children were running about, and women were busy with cooking. At their appearance, men came scrambling down ladders from the trees beyond, exchanged a few excited words with their escort, and, shouting with delight, joined themselves to the party.

'Quite a Roman triumph,' said Hoole with a sickly smile.

'Roman?' said Trentham, roused from the listlessness into which he had fallen. 'Those fellows in front might almost be Romans, bar the colour.'

'They 're a better breed than the crowd behind. Don't look like cannibals.'

'D' ye hear that?' Meek whispered to Grinson. 'Mr. Hoole says they ain't cannibals.'

'Mr. Hoole won't be the fust,' growled the boatswain.

Meek was half a minute or so in seeing the connection between Grinson's reply and his own statement. When light dawned, he contemplated the boatswain's rotundity with mournful composure.

The procession was swelled by accretions from two more villages during

the next hour. Some of the new-comers pressed close to the prisoners, now almost overcome by heat, hunger, and weariness, and discussed them excitedly. Hoole and Trentham walked on with nonchalant disregard; Meek wore a deprecating look; Grinson turned upon them a truculent countenance, disfigured by the mosquitoes' attentions.

Another hour had passed; the captives were on the verge of collapse, even Grinson's face had lost its ruddy hue, when, emerging from the forest, they found themselves in a clearing several acres in extent, divided off into plots on which crops of various kinds were growing. Beyond stood a line of neatly thatched huts, and in the distance was what appeared to be a closely built stockade. A broad road ran through the midst of the settlement. At the approach of the procession, now some sixty strong, women and children flocked from the fields and gathered, wondering spectators, on the road, and men sprang up from the ground in front of the huts, and hastened to meet the new-comers.

The elder of the two leaders turned round and shouted a few words. All but ten of the Papuans halted. The ten continued their march behind the prisoners, through a lane between two of the huts, until they arrived at a narrow gateway in the stockade. This, on nearer view, proved to be a formidable wall of pandanus trunks cemented with earth, and with an earthen parapet that bore a strange resemblance to the machicolations of a mediæval castle.

The gate was thrown open; the two leaders, the prisoners, and their escort passed through, and the scene that met the white men's eyes filled them with astonishment. On either side stood a row of neat wooden houses with gabled roofs and long window openings. The woodwork showed crude attempts at decoration in red and white. In the centre was a larger, loftier building than the rest, also of wood, but constructed like a rough imitation of a castle keep.

Within this inner enclosure there were none but men, all of good stature, well proportioned, and with the arched nose and straight hair which the prisoners had remarked in the two leaders of the procession. In colour they were a bright bronze, contrasting forcibly with the lustreless black of the Papuan escort.

A few yards from the central building the prisoners were halted, and the young leader went forward alone, disappearing within an arched doorway. In a few minutes he returned, accompanied by a tall old man with white hair and wrinkled brow, naked like the others, except for a broader loin-cloth and a heavy gold chain, curiously wrought, about his neck.

'"The noblest Roman of them all!"' quoted Hoole, under his breath. 'Where on earth are we?'

The apprehensions of all the prisoners, were for the moment smothered by surprise and wonderment.

At the appearance of the old man in the doorway, the ten Papuans fell

on one knee, like courtiers before a king. The chief gazed fixedly at the white men, appraising them one after another. A cruel smile dawned upon his face–a smile that in an instant revived in the prisoners the worst of their fears. During the march Trentham had buoyed himself with the hope that these natives of a higher type might turn out to be friendly; the hope died within him now. The chief had evidently heard all about the prisoners from the young man who had visited him during the night. He had now come to pronounce their doom.

'Rhadamanthus,' murmured Hoole. 'Try him with pidgin, Trentham. He hasn't heard our defence.'

'Chief, we English fella,' cried Trentham. 'Come this side look out black fella man; no fighting this time.'

The old man beckoned to one of the men who had come from the houses right and left, and now stood spectators of the scene. The man came forward, and after the chief had addressed a few words to him in his own tongue, he said to Trentham:

'White fella man no belongina this place. White fella man come this place, make fire houses belongina black fella man, fight black fella man all same too much; white man he belongina die.'

Trentham understood from this that he and his friends were supposed to be connected with the white men who had recently burnt the tree village and ill-treated the natives.

'We no belongina bad fella man,' he hastened to explain. 'Like you fella, no like bad fella come ship stop this place; ship no belongina me.'

The interpreter translated to the chief, who listened with a derisive air, shrugged his shoulders, and threw out his hands, and made answer:

'Chief he say all belongina gammon: you come all same place other white fella man, no look out good alonga him. He finish talk alonga you.'

'The Huns have queered our pitch,' said Trentham to Hoole, with a wry smile. 'We are at their mercy.'

'Wish I had my hands free,' said Hoole. 'What's the end to be?'

One of the Papuans, with every sign of humility, was addressing the chief. Into the old man's eyes crept the cruel smile which had already caused the prisoners to shiver. He spoke a few words; the Papuans sprang up gleefully, crowded about the white men, and jabbered with excitement. They gave scarcely a glance at Meek, who stood in his usual drooping attitude, open-eyed with fright. They stared critically at the two younger men, seemed to dispute for a few moments, then turned to Grinson and began to poke him in the ribs. The boatswain glared, cursed, kicked, only to be caught by the leg and thrown to the ground. Hoole and Trentham made a movement towards him, but were instantly seized by the natives standing by. After a vain struggle, Grinson lay inert. The Papuans hauled

him to his feet, and marched him away towards the gate.

'Good-bye, Mr. Trentham; good-bye, Mr. Hoole!' he shouted. 'So long, Ephraim, me lad! The anchor's weighed. Remember me.'

Pale to the lips, the three others watched the chief as he followed the indomitable seaman with his eyes. When the gate was shut he turned to the young native who had first discovered the white men, and spoke to him, using, as it appeared to Trentham, a dialect differing somewhat from that in which he had addressed the Papuan and the interpreter. Now and then it had a nasal quality that reminded Trentham of French, and presently he caught a word or two that sounded like debased forms of French words he knew.

A drowning man will catch at a straw, and Trentham, incredible though it appeared that the natives hereabout should be familiar with French, as a last hope determined to try the effect of a word or two in that language.

'*Monsieur parle français?*' he said, using the first phrase that occurred to him, and anxiously watching the chief.

Both the old man and the young looked at him with astonishment.

'*Monsieur parle français?*' he repeated.

'*Oui, flançais,*' said the chief, and went on speaking in a gibberish which, though it had a French intonation, was utterly incomprehensible to Trentham.

'*Nous sommes amis des Français,*' he said.

'*Oui, amis,*' echoed the chief, and talked on. Then, apparently seeing that Trentham was bewildered, he called up the interpreter, and spoke to him in the Papuan dialect he had formerly used.

'Chief he say you savvy him talk, say you come this place belongina ship. What for come this place?'

Trentham almost despaired of finding his resources of pidgin English suffice to explain the situation of himself and his companions. But conscious how much depended on him, he did his best.

'Me belongina English ship; bad fella belongina another ship, he fighting me, no more ship. He no like white fella man; come fight this time black fella belongina all place. English fella man like Flansai fella, no like Toitsche fella–you savvy all same?'

He clenched his fist, and shook it in the direction where he supposed the Raider to lie. The explanation, translated, seemed to excite the chief, who turned to his young compatriot and entered into an animated discussion with him.

While they were still talking, the gate in the wall was once more thrown open, and to the white men's utter amazement, Grinson marched in at the head of a procession of his captors. His arms were unbound, his face was wreathed in smiles, his body was bare to the waist.

'Ahoy, messmates!' he cried at the top of his voice, rather hoarsely. 'Beg

[image]

GRINSON MARCHED IN AT THE HEAD OF A PROCESSION.

pardon, young gents, but I mean to say–oh, cripes! Ephraim, me lad, I never thought I 'd see you again, 'cept as a ghost. Am I drunk? No, but I 'm darned merry, which I mean to say–I say, old cock,' turning to a Papuan, 'get me a drink–get us all a drink, and we 'll drink your health and say no more about it.' He raised his arm, and kissed a spot just below his shoulder. 'Kiss it too, ugly mug! Come on, all you lubbers, kiss it, or I 'll never love you no more!'

And to his friends' amazement the Papuans came to him one by one, and reverently kissed the spot, Grinson beaming on them.

'That's right! It tickles, and I don't like your ugly nose bones, but you 've good 'earts. No, you don't–once is enough,' he cried to a man who offered the salute a second time.

'"When I was young and had no sense!"–no, blamed if it wasn't the most sensiblest thing ever I did, and that's saying something.' He had now come up to his amazed companions. 'There it is–that's what done it. "A sweet little cherub what sits up aloft,"–beg pardon, sir, I feels like singing all the time. That's what done it!' He displayed his arm, on which was the blue tattooed effigy of a bird of paradise. 'They peeled off my shirt, and there was I looking for 'em to plunge the knife into my bare bussum, when dash me if they didn't start back with horror like as if I 'd the smallpox–and me vaccinated, too, twice, on this very arm. 'Twas the bird what done it, like the strawberry mark what proved to the Marchioness of Mayfair that the dustman was her long-lost son and heir, stole from his cradle by the lady's maid she 'd sacked for swilling of her eau de colony. The ugly mugs take me for a long-lost brother, and dash me if I ain't the best-looking of the family, Ephraim, me lad.'

While the hilarious mariner was reeling off his yarn, the Papuans had explained to the chief that, having discovered on his arm the image of the totem of their tribe, they had brought him back, to exchange him for one of the other prisoners, unless they too should prove to be sacrosanct. To their intense discontent, the chief had refused to allow them even to examine the arms of the three men; and while Trentham and his companions were still digesting the astounding story told by Grinson, the crestfallen savages stole out of the gate in sullen

ill-humour.

CHAPTER VII
REMINISCENCES

'A most fortunate coincidence, Grinson, that you happened to be tattooed with the totem mark of these strange people,' said Trentham. 'But for that we might all have gone into the pot in turn.'

The four men were seated in a hut placed at their disposal by the chief, appeasing their famishment with a variety of more or less unfamiliar foods.

'Ay, ay, sir!' returned the boatswain; 'though I never heard it called a totem mark afore. True, my head was spinning like a teetotum when 'twas done, and if I 'd been a teetotaller–upon my word, sir, 'tis the remarkablest thing I ever heard on. Ephraim, me lad, you can bear me out: wasn't that the only time you ever saw me squiffed?'

'Which time was that, Mr. Grinson?' asked Meek.

'Why, the time I had this 'ere teetotum mark pricked into my biceps.'

'I 'm bound to say as how that was one of the times you was a trifle overcome, though nothing to what you might have been.'

'True, if I 'd been overripe they couldn't 'a done it, nor if I 'd had nothing at all, which it shows the good o' moderation, gentlemen. I was just comfortable; you know–when you 're pleased with everything and everybody. 'Twas like this. I was never like most sailormen, as gets tattooed their first voyage, and ever after has the sins o' their youth staring 'em in the face–like Ephraim, poor lad.'

Meek looked guiltily at his long bony wrists and tried to draw his sleeves down over the blue anchors tattooed on them.

'No,' Grinson went on, 'I was never a man for show. Well, some messmates of mine didn't understand my modest spirit, and laid their heads together for to give me the hall-mark as proves a seaman sterling, you may say. Ben Trouncer was at the bottom of it: the slyest sea-dog of a fellow you ever set eyes on. He come to me one night when I happened to be alone, all but Ephraim, in the bar-parlour of the "Jolly Sailors," and says, "Going to the meeting on Wednesday, Josy?" says he. "What meeting?" says I. "You don't mean to tell me you don't know!" says he. "I 'd never have believed it. All the others are going; meeting to form a sailors' goose club," says he. "Fust I heard of it," says I. "What's a goose

club?" "Why," says he, "you pay so much a week, and at Christmas every sailorman gets a goose, wherever he is–Melbourne, Shanghai, Buenos Ayres, anywhere you like. Fancy you not knowing of it! Why, they all expect you to be made treasurer of the club. Let's have another pot, and I 'll tell you all I knows."

'Well, Ben went on talking like a gramophone as won't run down–about subscriptions and foreign agents, and what a heap of money there 'd be to take charge of, and he hoped I 'd be made treasurer, because some of 'em wanted a scag called Joe Pettigrew, a fellow you wouldn't trust with the price of a pot of four-half, which I agreed with, and said if Joe was made treasurer he 'd get no subscriptions out of me. "Well," says Ben, "Joe 's the only man I 'm afraid of, and I 'll tell you why. Them as wants him are going to propose that no one as ain't tattooed is to be edible for membership–see? Just to keep you out, 'cos they know there ain't a speck of blue about you." "Ho!" says I. "That 's their game. Well, they can make Joe treasurer, and he 'll pinch all your money, but not mine, 'cos I can't join, not if I want to."

'Well, he calls for another pot and goes on talking, and by long and short he worked me up to believe as how the whole thing would bust up if I wasn't treasurer, and the picture he drored of the sailorman going without his Christmas goose was worse than onions for tickling your eyeballs. Then he told me how I 'd take the wind out o' Joe's sails if I had a nice fat goose tattooed on my shoulder out of sight, and spring it on 'em when they was cocksure I wasn't edible for membership. Having had three or four pots, the notion tickled my fancy, and I had it done by a Jap as was the cleverest hand at tattooing you ever set eyes on. Ben had left him in the bar till he talked me over.

'Well, I went to the meeting, and Joe and his mates sniggered when they saw me. Ben proposed the club; carried unanimous. Some one else proposed about the tattooing; carried unanimous. Then Ben proposed me for treasurer. Up jumps one of Joe's friends and said I couldn't be treasurer, 'cos I couldn't even be a member, not being tattooed. "Ho!" says I, "who says I ain't tattooed?" They laughed. "Who don't know that?" says they. "Ho!" says I, "you knows a lot," and I stripped and showed 'em the finest goose as ever hung in Leadenhall Market.

[image]

'WHO SAYS I AIN'T TATTOOED?'

'Well, after that they made me treasurer, unanimous, even Joe voting for me, which it surprised me at the time. Then Ben said that, me being treasurer, 'twas for me to propose what the subscription should be. "Right," says I. "Then I

propose three-pence a week." I was fair flabbergasted when Ben got up and spun a long yarn which I couldn't make head or tail on, and ended by proposing they didn't have no subscription at all. Carried unanimous. It was a plant, you see, gentlemen. I was fair done. There never was no goose club, and only one goose, and that was me, my mother said when I told her all about it.'

'And your goose is a bird of paradise,' said Trentham.

'A bird of—- Ho, here 's ugly mug! What might he want now?'

In the open doorway stood the interpreter.

'Chief he say white man fella come alonga him,' said the man, looking at Trentham.

'A royal command,' remarked Trentham, rising. 'I 'll try to get him to provide us with guides to Wilhelmshafen.'

Some ten minutes after Trentham's departure the rest were startled by a long-drawn howl, like the sound of hundreds of men hooting an unpopular speaker.

'Blue murder!' exclaimed Grinson, as he hurried with the others to the doorway. The noise came from beyond the stockade. The gate was shut, and the natives within the enclosure were strolling about with no appearance of concern. Trentham was not visible.

'I 'm afeard they 've took Mr. Trentham instead,' said Meek lugubriously.

'Nonsense!' cried Hoole. 'That wasn't a cry of delight. But I 'll just run across to the chief's house; Mr. Trentham is probably there.'

At the entrance of the house he was stopped by two natives, armed with spears, who stood there on guard.

'You there, Trentham?' he called into the interior.

'Yes; I 'll be with you shortly,' came the answer.

Reassured, Hoole returned to the hut.

'It's all right, Meek,' he said. 'Don't get the wind up.'

'No, Ephraim, me lad,' said Grinson, 'don't strain at your anchor. 'Tis your great fault.'

It was half an hour or so before Trentham rejoined them.

'The strangest story I 've ever heard,' he said. 'It wasn't easy to make out that fellow's pidgin English, but I 'll tell you what I understand of it. Long ago, soon after the beginning of the world, a big ship came ashore after a great storm. (That's our wreck, of course.) The ship's white chief, a great medicine-man, had come to assist the forefathers of this tribe, then at war with many powerful neighbours. By the power of his fire magic–blunderbusses, no doubt–their enemies were defeated; but I suppose his ammunition gave out, for, as the chief put it, the fire magic was lost.

'The ship's captain was evidently a Frenchman. Finding it impossible to

leave the island, he and his crew settled down and took wives among the tribe, and became the ruling caste. The present chief is probably the great-grandson of the Frenchman; he has no idea how old he is, or how many generations come between him and his ancestor. From the portrait of Louis XVI. we saw in the cabin, it's pretty clear that this happened a hundred and twenty odd years ago. In that time, of course, the French stock has degenerated; as you heard, they 've retained a word or two of the French language, and they 've tried to keep themselves select by banishing from their inner enclosure all who take after the aborigines in feature, retaining only those who have something of the European cast of face. That, as I understood the story, has led to trouble. It's a case of plebs and patricians over again. The patricians are gradually weakening, the plebs becoming stronger; and the chief seems to be decidedly jumpy; his authority is waning. You heard that howl just now?'

'We did,' replied Hoole. 'Meek made sure you 'd been thrown to the dogs.'

Trentham smiled.

'The fact is, the plebs were disappointed of their feast. They are cannibals; the patricians are not. A big fellow came up as spokesman of the plebs, and declared they must have one of us four. Grinson is protected by his goose, and the chief wouldn't give them you, Hoole, or me, because we know French. But he suggested that we might dispense with Meek.'

'Me, sir!' cried Meek.

'Yes. I gathered that the chief was anxious to conciliate his rather unruly subjects, and I had a good deal of difficulty in begging you off, pointing out (I hope you don't mind) that you are rather lean and scraggy—-'

'Danged if that ain't too bad!' cried Meek with unwonted vehemence.

'Well, really, I thought it the best way to get you off.'

'"Tis not that I mind, sir–not at all, and I 'm obliged to you. I was always skin and bone, no matter what I eat—-'

'Like the lean cattle in the Bible, Ephraim,' said Grinson, 'what ate up the fat uns and you 'd never have knowed it.'

'True, so I was born,' Meek went on, 'and so I must be. But the idea of eating me, just because I never had no goose pricked on my arm nor can't parly-voo! Danged if there 's any justice in this world–not a morsel.'

'Well, you 're safe now, anyway,' said Hoole, smiling. 'Did you hear anything about Hahn, Trentham?'

'Yes. It appears that the numbers here have recently been increased by the influx of people from one or two small coast villages that have been destroyed by the Germans. This place, being farther from the sea, has escaped as yet; but the chief is rather alarmed, and has scouting parties constantly out to give warning if the white men from the ship approach. Apparently Hahn fell into the hands of

one of those parties. The chief told me that a white man had been taken down to the shore to be sacrificed in the hope of averting disaster. The sacrificial party has not returned yet, and I thought it wiser to say nothing about the rescue of the victim; it wouldn't tend to make us popular with the plebs. The worst of it is, the chief seems to think we 'll be useful to him. When I talked about his helping us to get away he suddenly became deaf, and I couldn't help judging from his manner that he wants to keep us, either to prop him up against his troublesome people, or to protect him from the Germans. We had better humour him for the moment. At any rate we shall get food. By and by we can take our bearings, possibly make or get hold of a canoe. It's no good our attempting to make our way overland to Wilhelmshafen through a country infested by cannibals.'

'And precious little good our staying to help him against the Germans with nothing but a revolver and our knives,' said Hoole. 'Still, there 's nothing else for it. If we can gain the people's confidence they may help us in the end–especially if the Raider clears off, and I guess it won't remain in these waters for ever. But it's deuced unpleasant.'

'Ay, and there 's neither justice nor mercy in this world,' sighed Meek. 'Eat me! Br-r-r!'

CHAPTER VIII
A RECONNAISSANCE

The hut allotted to the four white men, like all the others in the inner enclosure, was built of logs, and in shape resembled an expanded sentry-box. It had no furniture except a few grass mats laid upon the earthen floor, and a clumsy rack of sticks, containing some crude platters of clay, and a couple of heavy wooden clubs. Worn out by their recent experiences, the occupants slept soundly through their first night as the chief's guests, only disturbed at intervals by the visitations of cockroaches which the darkness drew from crevices in the walls.

Next morning they were given a breakfast of bananas and nuts, and water brought to them in long bamboo stalks, which had been cleaned of their partitions except at the end.

'We are not supposed to wash,' remarked Trentham, 'and we can't shave; before long we shall all be as hairy as Meek.'

Meek looked apologetic, and Grinson passed a hand over his cheeks and

chin, already dark with stubble.

'A regular Jack ashore, sir,' he said, 'and no barber round the corner. What is to be will be, and I only hope I make a better show than Ephraim; his whiskers ain't much of an ornament, I must say.'

'I ought to have shaved young,' sighed Meek. '"Tis too late now, Mr. Grinson.'

'Truly, Ephraim, you 've lost your chance, poor lad. But you might look worse, that's one comfort.'

While they were at breakfast the man who had interpreted on the previous day came with a message from the chief. They were free to move about the enclosure, but the gate was forbidden them.

'We 're prisoners, then,' said Hoole.

'I fancy he doesn't trust the cannibals outside,' said Trentham. 'For the present I dare say we are safer where we are. But I don't know how we are to kill time.'

'Here you are, sir,' said Grinson, producing a greasy pack of cards. 'A rubber or two 'll be good for the digestion. Ephraim plays a good hand, though you might not think it.'

While they were playing cards a man came from the chief's house and looked in on them through the doorway. His shadow caused them to glance up, and Hoole and Trentham recognised him as the patrician leader of the party from whom they had rescued Hahn. They wondered whether the recognition was mutual, feeling that it might go hardly with them if they were known; but the man, after a prolonged stare of curiosity, departed without giving any sign of suspicion. It came out afterwards that his party, finding the chimney blocked, had had to wait for the ebb tide and then walk for some miles along the shore before they reached a practicable path up the cliffs. They had then returned to the chimney, removed the obstruction from its top, and sought to track the fugitives; but they had lost the trail in the forest.

Several days passed–days of tedium and growing irritation. The prisoners were given regular meals of bananas, sweet potatoes, and other roots, sometimes a bird or a pig; but movement beyond the stockade was still interdicted. They saw nothing of the chief, and one day, when Trentham sent him a message, asking that they might be allowed to go out and see what the Germans were doing, the answer was that he was sick, and could not attend to them until he was out and about again. Hoole suggested that it was a diplomatic illness, but the sight of the hideously painted figure of the tribal medicine-man going every day into the chief's house seemed to show that the reason given was genuine.

One afternoon there were signs of much excitement in the village. From beyond the stockade came a babel of voices; a man admitted through the gate

gave those within some news which appeared to agitate them, and a few minutes after he had entered the chief's house the interpreter came running to the hut, and said that the chief wished to see the 'white man fella' at once.

'Release at last!' said Trentham when he returned. Alone of the four, Meek showed no sign of pleasure.

'The old fellow is in a pretty bad way,' Trentham went on. 'The medicine-man was chanting incantations over him, and he looked pathetically resigned. He had just heard bad news. It appears that his son, whose name I understood to be Flanso–a corruption of François, I fancy–went out yesterday with a small scouting party, and had just got through that burnt village when they were surprised by a number of white men and collared; only the messenger escaped. Among the party was Kafulu, the head-man of the natives outside, and it's to that fact we owe our chance. I offered to go out and see if I could discover what had become of the prisoners, anticipating the chief's request. He jumped at it, and told me that the cannibals outside, when they understand what our errand is, won't do us any harm. But only you and I are to go, Hoole; the others must remain as hostages.'

'A dirty trick, sir,' said Meek. 'As sure as your back is turned, they 'll eat me; I know they will.'

'Don't you take on, Ephraim,' said Grinson. '"Tis true I 'd rather go with the gentlemen, but I 'll protect you, me lad. Before they eat you, they 'll have to cook my goose.'

Early next morning, Hoole and Trentham started with half a dozen of the chief's best men and the interpreter. Hoole had his revolver, Trentham a spear like those with which the escort were armed. They marched rapidly through the forest, reached the burnt village about midday, and found there the bodies of two of the scouting party, shot by the Germans. From this point they moved with great circumspection, the guide leading them through a maze of vegetation by a winding track that bore downhill, crossing narrow gullies and swift hill streams.

Late in the afternoon they entered a tract of country strewn with rounded boulders, which had no doubt been brought down in remote ages by glacial action from the mountain range in the interior. Here the ground sloped steeply to the edge of the cliffs, and they had a view far over the sea. Deprived of cover by the lack of vegetation, they bore away towards the forest on the right. Though they had approached by a different route, the white men now recognised the spot from which they had caught sight of the Raider lying in the cove below the cliffs. Half-way down the forest-clad slope Trentham called a halt.

'We know where we are now, Hoole,' he said, 'and I think we had better leave the natives here under cover while we go on by ourselves. They 'll be no good to us in reconnoitring, and the fewer the better on a job like this.'

He instructed the interpreter to remain with the men on guard, and if not rejoined by nightfall, to return to the village.

A very rough and narrow track led through the trees and scrub with which the whole face of the cliff was covered. The two men crept cautiously down this for some distance; then it occurred to Hoole that it would be safer to make a way of their own through the bush, for at some turn of the track they might suddenly meet some one ascending, or emerge unexpectedly into view from the beach. Accordingly they turned off to the right, and continued their course as quickly as possible under cover, moving parallel with the track.

Not many minutes had passed before they had reason to be glad that the precaution had occurred to Hoole in time. Less than a hundred yards below the spot where they had quitted the track they came to the edge of a space from which the vegetation had been cleared away. The path ran through this, and at one side of it stood a rough log hut where a German sailor, armed with a rifle, was standing on guard. Trentham, a little in advance of Hoole, was the first to catch sight of the man. He motioned to Hoole to halt, peered out for a few moments at the scene before him, then went back.

'There 's a sentry-post below,' he said in a low tone. 'The man's back was towards me; he was watching something going on below him. We shall have to creep round. It's pretty rough going; take care you don't slip.'

Keeping on the seaward side of the sentry, they wormed their way through the bush. With every step the descent became steeper, and they had to cling to branches and roots in order to keep their footing. The contour of the cliff hid them from the sentry, but the dislodging of a loose stone might at any moment betray their presence, and they let themselves down inch by inch with great care.

[image]

WITH EVERY STEP THE DESCENT BECAME STEEPER.

As they had noticed on the occasion of their previous visit, the cove in which the Raider lay was almost encircled. The cliff which they were now scaling jutted out in a kind of spit on the eastern side. When they finally reached its base they found themselves among a tangle of jagged rocks. The tide was coming in, and they realised from the banks of seaweed that the rocks were covered at the flood, and that they had little time to spare if their reconnaissance was to lead them much farther and they had to return by the same route.

After a precautionary glance seaward they began to make their way through the mass of rocks, clambering, springing from one to another, always

careful not to expose themselves to the view of the sentry somewhere high up on their left. Presently, between two high rocks at the outer edge, they caught sight of blue water. Entering the gap, they looked out, and found that almost the whole of the cove was before them.

'She 's gone,' said Hoole.

The well-remembered vessel was no longer at her anchorage. No craft of any kind lay within the cove. But men were moving about the beach. To the left, near the base of the cliff, above high-water mark, were two large sheds; a little further on was a third shed, still larger. Between them the beach was covered with much miscellaneous litter, the nature of which the observers could not at present determine. What interested them most, and for a time puzzled them, was the sight of many dark figures working on a natural ledge some eighty feet above the sea level on the opposite side of the cove. They heard the sound of picks, and saw black men bringing baskets from a narrow tunnel in the cliff face, and emptying them on to the beach below. From the spot where the contents fell clouds of black dust rose high into the air. A white man was walking up and down the ledge, occasionally moving his right arm in a curiously jerky manner; and amid the other sounds came now and then rough shouts and sharp cracks.

'By George, Hoole!' exclaimed Trentham under his breath, 'that particular mystery is solved. They are working coal! There must be an outcrop in the cliff; of course they are not mining. The Raider can't rely on filling her bunkers from captures, apparently, or they wouldn't go to all this trouble.'

'I guess it's the niggers get the trouble,' remarked Hoole. 'That fellow–in the distance he 's mighty like Halm–is making good play with his whip. You may bet your bottom dollar they snapped up Flanso and the rest to increase the number of their hands. Say, d' you hear that purr?'

He swung round and looked seaward, shading his eyes with his hands.

'There she is,' he exclaimed a few moments later. 'Skip behind the rock, Trentham; she 's diving right here.'

'The seaplane?'

'Yes. Can't you see her? She 's cut off her engines, making a very pretty swoop. See her now?'

'Yes; you 've better eyes than mine, Hoole.'

Hoole smiled. His eyes were fixed on the machine with an intense admiring interest.

'She blips,' he said, as the engine spluttered for a second or two. 'Now she 's cut off again. The pilot knows his job. I wonder where she 'll come down.'

Crouching behind the rocks they watched the seaplane as it made a circling movement, diving all the time, until it swept round and headed straight for the entrance to the cove. From a height of about two hundred feet it swooped down

towards the sea, 'blipped' again, then descended lightly upon the surface, ran a few yards, and at last came to rest a little distance from the beach. Several bare-legged German sailors had already emerged from one of the nearer sheds. They waded into the water. Two of them carried the occupants of the seaplane on their backs to the shore, then returned to help their comrades to pull the machine in. It glided smoothly up the beach until it rested just below the sheds.

'Gliders all complete,' said Hoole.

'What do you mean?'

'They 've laid down boards on the beach; you can't see them from here. They are well greased, too, to judge by the speed the floats slid up them. Those Germans are pretty thorough, Trentham.'

'Where did you pick up all these details?' asked Trentham curiously.

'Oh, I 've seen that sort of thing once or twice before. But hadn't we better get back? There 's nothing more to be seen from this quarter, and I presume Flanso and his men are on that ledge yonder, or near about.'

'That farthest shed is the officers' quarters, by the look of it. The two airmen have just gone inside. We 've learnt the lie of the land and not much else, I 'm afraid. Can't we go a little farther along the shore, behind the rocks, and climb the cliff nearer the sheds?'

'We can try, but 'ware the sentry.'

They had not gone far, however, before the incoming tide forced them to leave the rocks and clamber up through the bushes. The ascent was even more difficult than the descent had been, and a miscalculation of the direction of the path on which this sentry-box stood almost led to their undoing. They had supposed that it ran fairly straight to the sheds from the point at which they had left it; but the nature of the ground had necessitated its being carried a good many yards farther along the cliff, and then it bent round and formed a loop, approaching the sheds in the same direction as Hoole and Trentham were now going. Unaware of this, they were slowly climbing when Trentham slipped, displacing a mass of loose earth which went rattling down the cliff. They were not greatly alarmed, thinking that the sentry was too far away to have heard the sound through the noise of the coal-tipping across the cove. But footsteps not far above them caused them to snuggle behind a thick bush. The rustle of movement above drew nearer. Through the bush they saw the sentry stepping cautiously down, and prodding the vegetation with his bayonet. Hoole fingered his revolver, but Trentham signed to him that if any weapon had to be used it must be the spear. The sentry, however, stopped ten or a dozen yards above them, then, apparently satisfied that the landslide was accidental, laboriously climbed up the cliff.

Much relieved, for violent measures would have been fatal to the success

of their reconnaissance, the two men waited for a quarter of an hour or so, then struck up the cliff some distance to the left of the spot where the sentry had appeared, and wormed their way to the path, far beyond his box, by a wide circuit. It was almost dark by the time they rejoined the natives. They marched a few miles until night descended upon them; then they rested for a while, discussing the results of their expedition.

'I 'm afraid the chief will be disappointed at our returning without his son,' said Trentham, 'but I hope he 'll see reason. We couldn't possibly have rescued him.'

'Clearly not,' said Hoole. 'There wasn't time to discover exactly where the Germans keep their slaves. I guess we 'll have to reconnoitre again, from the other side, before we can see our way clear. The absence of the Raider would help us considerably, for there appeared to be only about half a dozen Germans on the spot. I wish I could have seen whether that fellow cracking the whip was Hahn.'

'Why?'

'Well, we don't owe the skunk a great deal; besides, he 's got my watch.'

CHAPTER IX
COMPLICATIONS

'Does my eye squint, Ephraim, me lad?' asked Grinson, looking up into the face of his taller companion.

Meek gazed so earnestly at his questioner that his eyes converged.

'I don't see no sign of it, Mr. Grinson,' he said, 'and I wouldn't suppose as how you 'd be visited with that affliction at your time of life.'

'That's what I thought. Then why the mischief can't I hit that tree?'

Meek looked sadly at the tree in question, as if mutely reproaching it for declining to be hit.

'Maybe there 's a bias in the spear, like in bowls,' he said. 'My spear 's just the same, for dash me if I can hit the trunk neither.'

The two seamen, with half a dozen natives, were on outpost duty in a glade a few miles on the seaward side of the village. Trentham had reported the result of his reconnaissance to the ailing chief, who realised at once that an attempt to release his men by force from an enemy equipped with the fire magic that

his ancestors had lost was bound to fail. When Trentham pointed out that the Germans would probably make further raids, to increase the number of their slaves, and suggested the propriety of establishing outpost stations where watch might be kept, he assented, and agreed that Grinson and Meek should take their turns with the rest. Each band of natives chosen for this duty was accompanied by one who belonged to the chief's own caste, so that Meek's dread of being eaten, though not wholly removed, was a good deal lessened. The two men beguiled the tedious hours by practising spear-throwing under the tuition of the natives, but after three days had gained little skill. Grinson was more vigorous than accurate in his casts, while Meek, handling his spear as if it were a paper dart, could throw neither far nor straight; he was a model of patient ineptitude.

'I tell you what it is, Ephraim,' said the boatswain, sitting on the grass, 'spears ain't tools for Christians, and I 'd scorn to demean myself to these poor heathens, what knows no better. We 'll leave 'em to 'em, me lad. Not that they 'd be any good if the Germans come with guns.'

'D' you think they will, Mr. Grinson?'

"Course they will, if they come at all. I don't know what the gents mean by sticking on here. We can't do no good, and if they 'd listen to me we 'd slip off and chance our luck.'

'Aye, my vittals don't agree wi' me. I 'm falling away, Mr. Grinson. Look here.'

Meek was drawing together the band of his trousers to show how much he had fallen away, when Hoole came into the glade.

'Grinson, come with me,' he said. 'I want you to relieve Mr. Trentham at a new post we 've fixed up about a mile away. Carry on till I come back, Meek; I 'll relieve you then for a spell.'

Meek looked far from happy when left alone with the natives. Having nothing else to do, he picked up his spear and resumed his feeble practice. While he was so engaged, the natives, who had been seated, solemnly watching him, suddenly sprang to their feet and gazed expectantly towards the trees. Meek had heard nothing, and as he ambled forward to retrieve his spear he was startled by the silent appearance of Kafulu, one of the men who had been captured. Still more amazed was he to see that the Papuan carried a rifle.

The natives greeted their comrade with cries of joy, and crowded about him, plying him with questions. In a few moments they fell silent, and listened intently as Kafulu eagerly addressed them. Meek, a little in the background, watched his gestures, wondering what he was saying, and why he continually brandished the gun. Presently Kafulu turned and pointed in the direction from which he had come, and then Meek noticed that his back was seamed with scarcely healed weals. His attention was immediately diverted, for among the

trees at which Kafulu was pointing he caught sight of the faces of several white men, who appeared to be making signs of friendship. Now thoroughly alarmed, he turned to flee; but the Germans issued suddenly from the forest; one of them made a sign to Kafulu, who sprinted across the glade with some of his companions, sprang upon Meek from behind, and hauled him back.

[image]

KAFULU SPRANG UPON MEEK FROM BEHIND.

'Mr. Grinson. Ahoy, Mr. Grinson!' shouted Meek.

His last word was smothered by a big hand laid across his mouth, and his eyes widened with amazement when he looked into the face of his captor. There were six Germans, armed with rifles. Forming a guard round the natives, they hurried them into the forest, with Meek helpless in their midst.

About an hour later Hoole and Trentham returned to the spot.

'Hullo! There's no one here,' said Trentham. 'Meek understood that he was to wait here until relieved?'

'Yes. He looked a trifle uneasy, but he wouldn't desert his post. Surely—-'

'They couldn't resist the temptation, you mean? I hope it's not so bad as that. Let us see if we can trace the way he 's gone. Here 's his spear on the ground.'

'And here are his footprints. By gum, Trentham, look here: a good many European boots have been treading the grass. They came from the forest, and went back again. Germans, sure!'

'It looks like it. But it's unaccountable. The natives are too sharp-eared to have been taken by surprise. They ought to have got Meek away in time.'

'I 'll be shot if they haven't gone too! These are prints of bare feet, aren't they?'

'There 's no doubt about that. They *must* have been surprised and collared, without a shot fired. This is pretty bad, Hoole.'

'I guess they wanted more miners. Wonder they haven't raided the village long before this.'

'I suppose they didn't think it worth while to come so far from the cove and make an organised raid. Bows and spears wouldn't be much use against firearms, of course; but the Germans might have lost a few men in a regular attack, and they preferred to snap up small parties here and there.'

'Any good going after them?'

'Not an atom. You may be sure they 're armed, and we have–one revolver.

Things are in a deuce of a mess, Hoole. If the natives are such poor scouts we stand to lose more of these outposts. We shall have to drop the scheme. And the immediate thing now is to go and bring Grinson back; he 'll be mad at losing Meek. We had better talk things over with him, and see if anything can be done; for the life of me I can't think what.'

Trentham's contempt of the Papuans' scouting ability was not justified, as he would have known could he have heard and understood what Kafulu had said to his comrades. He had told them that the white men had the fire magic of which they had heard. It was hidden in the stick he showed them. If they would work for the white men, they too would be given sticks like the one he carried, and then they would be the lords of the village. Kafulu was Hahn's dupe and decoy.

When Grinson heard that his companion of twenty-five years had been captured, his eyes became moist, and at first he seemed incapable of speech. Then his lips were pressed together rigidly; he flung away his spear, snatched out his knife, and cried:

'Which way, sir? Let me get at 'em.'

'You 'd do no good, Grinson,' said Trentham. 'They 'd shoot you down.'

'But 'tis Ephraim, sir–the lad as has been wi' me all over the seven seas. I can't fool about and do nothing when my mate is digging coal for those blackguard Germans. I put it to you, young gentlemen—-'

'Yes, we understand; but you must see that we three are not in a position to attack goodness knows how many men armed with rifles. We should only be killed or collared too. The sole chance of rescuing Meek—-'

'Say the word, sir,' said Grinson as Trentham paused.

'Well, I confess I see no chance at the present moment; but at any rate it will be hopeless if we get into the Germans' clutches ourselves. Some plan may occur to us. Meanwhile let us get back. I 'm afraid the chief will be cut up at the loss of more of his men.'

With the natives of the outposts they set off towards the village. Long before they reached it there came through the forest a long-drawn mournful howl, or rather a chorus of howls, like the cries of hundreds of dumb animals in pain. Ejaculations broke from the lips of the natives. They looked at one another with expressions of dismay, then set off at a trot, howling as they went.

'They 've already got wind of it at the village,' said Hoole. 'Perhaps one or two fellows escaped.'

'"Tis worse than that, sir,' said Grinson. 'It means death. I heard the niggers howl like that, the time I was at Moresby. It fair chills your blood, though they 'll laugh like hyenas as soon as the funeral's over.'

Hurrying on, with the horrible sound growing ever louder, they arrived at the village, and found the whole population assembled in front of the stockade,

rocking themselves to and fro, and howling incessantly. Dark looks greeted the white men as they passed through the midst of the throng and entered at the open gate. Within, all was silent. No one was to be seen except the medicine-man, who was just issuing from the chief's house. He stalked slowly through the enclosure and out at the gate. Then the people emerged from their huts, and a number of the elder men formed up in procession and marched slowly into the house. When they had disappeared, the interpreter came up to Trentham.

'Chief fella, he gone dead,' he murmured.

CHAPTER X
THE CAST OF THE DIE

An hour after the white men's return, they watched from their hut the funeral procession winding towards the gate. Some of the younger men led the way; then followed four bearers, with the body of the dead chief encased in his sleeping-mat. Behind marched his relatives and the whole of the population of the enclosure, the men wearing towering head-dresses of feathers, the women carrying small branches.

'Shall we follow?' asked Hoole.

'Perhaps the people would like it,' replied Trentham.

But when they reached the gate at the tail of the procession they were stopped by the interpreter.

'New chief he say no come alonga,' said he. 'Me fella people say old chief he die alonga you; all proper mad.'

'That accounts for their scowls as we came in,' remarked Trentham. 'I suppose the medicine-man accuses us of giving the evil eye. But the new chief, whoever he is, evidently doesn't want us to be pulled to pieces.'

'Things are going from bad to worse,' said Hoole. 'Our news won't make them better pleased with us. I guess there 'll be trouble.'

The death of the chief and the absence of his son had in fact kindled a slumbering spark of revolt in the Papuan community. A chief in New Guinea at no time wields great authority over his tribe, and the prestige of the dominant caste had already fallen low. Authority was assumed by a cousin of the dead man, but he had no moral qualities to support it. After the funeral, when Trentham reported to him, through the interpreter, the capture of the outpost, his agitation

bordered on hysteria. The Papuans already connected their recent misfortunes with the arrival of the white men, who, they declared, were in league with the white men from the ship, and were responsible for the capture of their leader Kafulu and the late chief's son. The disappearance of the outpost would confirm their dark suspicions, and the fact that Meek also had gone would seem to them proof of collusion.

Trentham offered to relieve the chief of anxiety by quitting the place with his companions, but this suggestion only increased his distress, and it dawned upon Trentham that he was inclined to cling to the white men as upholders of his feebleness. How feeble he was became apparent before Trentham left the house. A number of the Papuans came to the outer gate and demanded an interview with their new chief. On being admitted, their spokesman recounted the disasters that had befallen the tribe since the strangers came, and insisted on the two younger men being given to them for a cannibal feast. Was it not the custom, they asked, within the memory of the elder men, for a sacrifice to be made on the death of a chief? The victims were at hand. As for the fat man who bore the totem mark on his shoulder, they must spare him, but being a white man he must be sent away; let him go into the forest.

The chief was on the point of yielding, in the hope of gaining popularity with his unruly subjects, when one of the elder patricians interposed. The late chief had spared the white men, he said; they were friends of Flanso, who would rightfully have succeeded his father; and if Flanso returned he would certainly vent his wrath on any one who did them harm. This firm stand on the part of a man of weight caused the unstable chief to veer. With an effort to assume a firm and dignified attitude he dismissed the deputation, who retired in undisguised dissatisfaction and anger.

It was only after they had departed that Trentham learnt from the interpreter what their object had been, and how their request had been received. Watching the scene intently, he had noted the indecision of the chief and the mischief that blazed in the eyes of the Papuans.

'I 'm afraid there 's trouble brewing,' he said on returning to his hut. 'The new chief's a man of straw; he 'll give way to the cannibals one of these times, and then—-'

'I guess we won't wait for that,' said Hoole. 'We should be no worse off in the forest, and I vote we clear out one dark night and take our chance.'

'What about Ephraim, sir?' asked Grinson. 'I say nothing about you two gentlemen, but only speak for myself, and I swear I won't leave these 'ere parts without Ephraim.'

'Sure,' said Hoole. 'I 'm with you all the time. But you 'll allow it requires a little consideration, Grinson, and my proposition is that we all put on our think-

ing caps and see if we can hit on one of those cunning plots you read of in story-books. I only wish I had a pipe. Smoke clears the air.'

Trentham smiled; Grinson opened his tobacco-box.

'Chewing won't do the trick, I suppose, sir,' he said. 'I 've enough twist for two quids.'

'No, no; I 've never chewed anything hotter than gum,' said Hoole. 'Keep your baccy, man. I say, it's time for our supper. They 're late this evening. Do they keep a fast after a funeral?'

'I fancy I hear 'em coming now, sir. Maybe it's an extra spread.'

But the native brought only the food to which they were accustomed, and of which they were heartily tired. It was dark by the time they had finished their meal. They had no light, but they squatted on their mats, chatting quietly until sleepiness should steal upon them. The sounds from beyond the stockade died down as usual; it seemed, indeed, that stillness had fallen upon the village earlier than on any previous night. Grinson was the first to close his eyes; the other two were still talking in low tones when a sudden commotion from the direction of the gate caused them to spring up and rush to the doorway, where Grinson immediately joined them. They could see nothing in the darkness, but the cries of the two men who always stood on guard were drowned by a chorus of savage yells. Men were heard rushing across the enclosure; then came the whistling of spears and sharp cracks of clubs falling on solid skulls.

'The beggars outside are attacking the stockade,' said Trentham.

'"Tis rank mutiny and rebellion,' growled Grinson. 'Shall we lend a hand, sir?'

Hoole had whipped out his revolver.

'Hold hard,' said Trentham; 'we may want that for a later occasion. I think we had better let them fight it out. For one thing, we 're not used to their weapons; then, if we take sides, we 're hopelessly done with the Papuans, and shouldn't dare to show our faces among them.'

'But we 'll have to fight for our lives if they break in,' said Hoole. 'We might get away now.'

'I don't think they 'll break in. The stockade 's very stout. Don't you think we might turn the crisis to account?'

'How do you mean?'

'Let us wait a little and see how the fight goes. Whichever side wins, I think we may have a trump card.'

They stood listening to the din, which appeared to be concentrated in the neighbourhood of the gate. It lasted only a few minutes. The sentries had detected the stealthy approach of the Papuans in the nick of time. The stockade was manned before the attack gathered force; its stout timbers resisted all the

onslaughts of the undisciplined savages, who drew off, baffled, carrying away those who had been disabled by the weapons of the defenders.

'Now 's the time for us to chip in,' said Trentham. 'It's clear that we are responsible, partly at any rate, for the situation. The Papuans suspect us of complicity with the Germans; they are angry because they can't feast on us; and they believe it's due to us that their friends have been captured. The present chief is no good; he 'll either give way to them in the end, or will ultimately be beaten by sheer weight of numbers. Nothing will restore the position but the return of the rightful chief–that young fellow Flanso.'

'Who 's a prisoner,' remarked Hoole.

'Exactly. Well, we must rescue him and the other prisoners, including Meek. By that means we shall please everybody.'

'You 've got a plan?'

'An idea came into my head suddenly just now when the fight was going on. With care and luck it may work. If you like it, I 'll go and see the chief, and we can start to-morrow.'

During the next twenty minutes the three men were engaged in an earnest discussion. Then Trentham made his way to the chief's house, where most of the important men of the community were assembled. Half an hour later he returned to his friends.

'It's all right,' he said. 'By Jove! talking pidgin is the most tiring job I know. In the morning the chief will make an oration at the gate. He 's not at all keen on his new job, and would like to see Flanso back. He believes the rebels will be willing to give us a chance. Then it's up to us.'

The chief turned out to be better as an orator than as a man of action–Cicero rather than Coriolanus, as Trentham suggested. His speech brought about an instant change of feeling in the Papuans. If the white men restored Kafulu and his comrades to them, they would let bygones be bygones. If Flanso also was restored to his people, they would dutifully accept his authority.

Two hours after sunrise the whole population, a silent throng, gathered at the sides of the track to watch the white men start on their enterprise. Three stalwart natives accompanied them, each of whom carried, wound about his body, a long coil of grass rope. Grinson was himself again.

'Good-bye, old ugly mug,' he cried as he passed the man who had discovered his totem mark. 'Wait till the clouds roll by. Farewell, sweet maid'–to a hideous old woman; 'for they all love Jack, and you 'll meet us coming back, and there 'll be dancing with the lasses on the green, oh! It pleases 'em, sir,' he said, apologetically, to Trentham, 'though they don't understand, poor heathens. But I 've been told I 've got a very good singing voice.'

'Let's hope you won't sing another tune before the day 's over,' said Tren-

tham.

CHAPTER XI

THE ORDEAL OF EPHRAIM MEEK

Meek's mind worked slowly. For some little time, as he marched shorewards among his fellow captives, he realised merely the fact that he was a prisoner in the hands of the Germans. He did not ask himself why he had been captured, or throw his imagination forward in an effort to forecast his fate. With his usual shambling gait he trudged on, glancing now at the Papuans, now at the Germans, and occasionally stroking his thin whiskers in the manner of one who finds the world a great puzzle.

Presently illumination came to him. Fixing his eyes on the stout figure of the man who led the party, he muttered 'Trousers!' and thought of Mr. Grinson. Yes, to be sure, this was the extraordinary mariner who had swum ashore from a wreck without soiling his trousers, who had been saved from the cannibals' cooking pot, and had mysteriously disappeared when leading his rescuers to Mushroom Hill. His trousers were not so clean as they had been; there were black smudges on them. What would Mr. Grinson say to that?

Before Meek had got much further in his cogitations, he found himself fully occupied in keeping his footing on a rugged zigzag path that scored the surface of a steep downward slope. Then, lifting his eyes, he beheld the sea, and below, in a still cove, a vessel painted bright blue lying close inshore, and moored stem and stern. In shape she resembled the raider which had sunk the *Berenisa* a few weeks before, but she had had a new coat of paint. Meek saw at a glance that she had steam up, and wondered whether she was short-handed and he had been impressed to make up her complement.

A turn in the path shut the vessel from his view, but opened up another scene. On the left a number of natives were felling small trees, in charge of a European who every now and then cracked a long whip. 'I don't hold with nigger-driving!' thought Meek, shaking his head as he passed on.

The path becoming easier, he was now able to think of something more than his feet. '"Tis the Raider,' he said to himself, 'though never did I see a ship of her tonnage painted sky blue afore. Trousers is a German, without a doubt. Now what 's he think he 's going to do with me? I 'll not sign on with a German

pirate–never!'

Another turn brought the cove again into view. The seaplane had just risen from the surface, and was now soaring towards the western horn. A few seconds afterwards Hahn and his party reached the sentry, who saluted, looking curiously at Meek. Hahn struck to the left, and presently, after another steep descent, came to the broad ledge on which natives were moving up and down, carrying baskets out of a shallow tunnel. The full baskets were tipped over on to the beach, then taken back to the tunnel to be refilled. In charge of the toilers was a sturdy German seaman, who had a rifle slung over his back and held in his right hand a long, evil-looking whip.

Meek's ideas were becoming clarified. As a seaman he knew what a great expenditure of coal was involved in keeping the Raider with steam up, even though the fires were banked. Clearly the Germans had been scouring the neighbourhood for men to work the seam which they had discovered in the cliff side. But he was still wondering what he had to do with all this, when he received a rude shock.

'Another batch for you, Hans,' said Hahn in German to the overseer. 'There 's an Englishman among them as you see. It's almost time to knock off now. Put him in the compound with the rest; we 'll set him at work to-morrow.'

The man grinned. Herding the new batch of prisoners into an enclosure like a sheep pen, adjacent to the mouth of the tunnel, he drew a hurdle across the entrance, and returned to superintend the last operations of the day. Hahn, meanwhile, had descended to the beach and entered the officers' shed.

Meek, of course, had not understood what Hahn had said. Without suspicion of the morrow's destiny, he found himself penned up with half a dozen black men, and felt the indignity of his position.

'Like sheep!' he muttered. 'Like sheep! What would Mr. Grinson say?'

He was no longer beset by fears of being eaten. The natives squatted apart, talking among themselves, and watching their comrades on the ledge. If Meek could have understood their speech, he would have known that they were already suspicious of Kafulu, who had quitted them a little while before. Was it for this that he had enticed them away–to carry heavy baskets of black rock from a dark fearsome hole? How long would it be before they received the firesticks promised them? Their comrades looked unhappy. How quiet they were! How they shrank away when they passed the man with the whip! Where was Flanso?

Presently a whistle sounded below. The men who had empty baskets set them down against the wall of the ledge and stood in line. Those whose baskets were full tipped their contents on to the beach, and joined their fellows. From the mouth of the tunnel streamed the niggers, blinking as they came into the light. Wearily they dragged themselves to their places in the line–silent, cowed,

miserable. Among them was Flanso, and at sight of him the six natives in the pen drew in their breath. His cheeks were hollowed; his skin was no longer a glistening bronze, but the dull black of coal dust.

The German counted the men as they formed up. When he had counted twenty-eight he cracked his whip, and the limp nerveless creatures turned to the right and marched into the pen, where they flung themselves down in utter dejection. They scarcely heeded the newcomers; only Flanso started on seeing Meek, and turned upon him a look of agonised inquiry, of which the seaman was unconscious.

A few minutes later four seamen came from below, each carrying two pails. They set these down within the pen, and at a signal from Hans the natives approached one by one, and took their food in their hands. Each man had as much as his two hands would hold of a sort of thick porridge. When Meek's turn came, he shook his head.

'No, it ain't proper,' he said. 'Not for a white man. I can't do it.'

Hans knew no English, but Meek's objection was obvious. He laughed, and when the seamen returned with pails of water he said to them: 'The English swine won't eat out of his hands. Tell the quarter-master.'

They jeered at Meek, took up the empty pails and departed. When they came back for the water-pails, one of them carried a basin of porridge, a spoon, and a mug of water, which he handed to Meek with an oath. While Meek ate his supper the Germans stood around him, uttering flouts and jibes, which, being incomprehensible, did not spoil his appetite. When he had finished they left with the utensils, another man came to relieve Hans for the night, and the prisoners were left in the pen until it was almost dark. Then the sentry cracked his whip, the natives sprang to their feet and lined up, and Meek looked on in astonishment as they were marched into the tunnel, the entrance to which, when all had gone in, was closed by means of a stout wooden grating. He was left alone in the pen.

'I don't rightly know if this is what they call slavery,' he murmured, 'but it do seem so. I don't hold with it. What would Mr. Grinson say?'

The night was chilly, and Meek slept uneasily. Once he was awakened by a flash from a lantern, and saw another German staring at him curiously.

'Aha, John Bull!' said the man with a grin.

Meek turned over and went to sleep again.

When he awoke, cramped and stiff, in the morning, the natives were filing into the pen. Breakfast was a repetition of supper, and after the meal Hans appeared, and drove the men back to their work. Three of the new prisoners were sent into the tunnel to dig, the other three were made carriers. Meek was again left alone.

About ten o'clock Hahn came up, with two of his fellow officers, who stared

at Meek, laughed, talked in their own language, and departed, leaving Hahn behind.

'Your, name is Meek, I zink so?' said the German.

'Ay, Ephraim Meek, that's my name.'

'So! Veil, Ephraim Meek, never I exbected to haf ze bleasure to see you again. Ze ozers–vere are zey?'

Meek looked at him for a few moments in silence. The German was not aware, then, that the other three had been with him in the native village. Slow-witted though he was, Meek had an inspiration. To tell the truth might harm his friends. He had a brief struggle with his conscience, decided for a compromise, and said:

'I don't know. They may be eat.'

'So!' Hahn looked pleased. 'Zey vere fatter as you. Ze niggers keep you to fatten, eh? Veil, Ephraim Meek, I save you, see? I bring you here. You are safe. Of course, you must make yourself useful. You shall eat, zerefore shall you vork. You shall find a pick or a basket–and zere is blenty of coal.'

Meek stroked his whiskers, looked at the German, then shook his head.

'No; I can't do it,' he said. 'Not coal.' Hahn laughed.

'You do look like a broken-kneed horse,' he said. 'Not equal to ze niggers; but you haf strength enough for zis job.'

'Not coal,' Meek repeated, in his mournful tones.

'Vy not coal? You are afraid to soil ze hands? Ach! Is coal more dirty as ze tar of your ropes? A seaman's hands! Ha! ha! You are funny man, Meek!'

Hahn laughed heartily; it seemed to him a very good joke. Meek, however, had thrust his hands into his pockets and set his lips doggedly.

'Come,' said Hahn impatiently. 'Zis is to vaste time. You shall—-'

'True, it is waste time,' Meek interrupted. Speaking with a firmness which Grinson would hardly have recognised, he went on: 'I 'll dig no coal for Germans, not I. I 'll not soil my hands with it. Not for German pirates. Never in the world.'

For a few moments Hahn stared at the seaman as though he were a strange animal, a curiosity in the natural world. Then he guffawed scornfully.

'So!' he ejaculated. 'You are a lord, eh? A prince, eh? You vill not vork, eh? And you exbect to haf good food for nozink, a broken-kneed swine of a sailor. Hans,' he cried, speaking in German, 'take this hound of an Englishman and tie him to yonder stump, and leave him there until he comes to his senses. He refuses to work. Not a morsel of food, not a drop of water. See to that!'

The man grinned, laid aside his whip, came into the pen, and seized Meek by the arm. And then Meek belied his name. His mild countenance was transfigured. Wrenching his arm from the German's grasp, he doubled his fist, and let out with a drive that sent the man staggering back against the fence. Though his

frame was slight, and his legs were neither shapely nor firm, he had not served a lifetime at sea without developing a certain muscular force. But his active resentment, natural as it was, was nevertheless unwise. The two Germans sprang on him together. His struggles were vain. Twisting his arms, his captors dragged him out of the pen to the tree-stump which Hahn had indicated, and in a minute had lashed him firmly to it. Hahn kicked him; the other picked up his whip and flicked the helpless prisoner, then rushed among the natives, who had halted to watch the scene, and smote right and left among them. With a parting jeer, Hahn descended the path to the beach, leaving Hans in charge.

Meek's face was towards the sea, and he had a full view of the ledge and of the cove below. The natives passed in and out of the tunnel, glistening with perspiration, urged to utmost exertion by fear of the merciless whip. They tipped their baskets over the brink of the ledge, coughing as clouds of black dust rose and enveloped them. On the beach some of the Raider's crew moved idly about. At the door of the shed Hahn stood talking to an officer, apparently the captain of the vessel; they both glanced up at the ledge, laughed, and evidently found amusement in discussing the plight of their victim. Meek noticed that there were no uniforms among the Germans, but a something indefinable in their air and gait bred the conviction that they were men of the navy.

It was not long before Meek was suffering torture from the heat and his bonds. He could not move either arms or legs; his throat was filled with coal dust; he longed for water to moisten his parched lips. Now and then the overseer passed him, grinning in his face, uttering words of mockery which affected Meek only by their tone. To him it was so much ugly bad language. He spoke no word, did not deign to beg for mercy, even though, as the hours passed, he felt that exhaustion and presently death itself must overtake him. In this time of trial it appeared that a new spirit had assumed possession of him–or rather the old spirit of British seadogs, the spirit that would scorn to show sign of flinching.

About midday Hahn came up to the ledge, and stood with arms akimbo, contemplating his prisoner.

'You see?' he said. 'You haf now enough? You vill obey?'

Meek gazed at him out of haggard eyes, but said never a word.

Hahn pointed to a man carrying a well-loaded tray into the officers' shed below.

'Blenty of food. Beer–English beer. A pint of 'alf-an'-'alf, eh? Zere is zome for you–ven you get coal. I am not hard, no. You say you vill dig, and I loose you–you shall haf a glass beer before you dig; zat is not hard? You say yes?'

Meek moved his tongue over his dry lips.

'Not for German pirates!' he muttered huskily.

'Pirates, you dog!' cried Hahn with a fierce scowl, and seemed to be about

to argue the point, but changed his mind. Cursing Meek as an English fool, he went away.

During the greater part of the day Meek was partly shaded from the sun by the cliff towering behind him; but in the afternoon the rays beat upon his head, and his agony increased. With all his strength of will he resisted the faintness that threatened to overpower him. He felt that he must not give way before these black men, who passed up and down hour after hour until his bloodshot eyes were dazzled.

The time came for work to cease. Again the natives were herded into the pen, and the seamen brought them their food. The Germans jeered at the helpless prisoner as they passed him; one of them dangled a pail of water under his eyes. Then exhausted nature could endure no more. Meek's head lolled forward. Hans rushed up, looked at him, and called down to the beach that the Englishman had fainted.

'Fling a pail of water over him!' shouted Hahn. 'I am coming.'

[image]

THE GERMAN FLUNG A PAIL OF WATER OVER THE UNCONSCIOUS MEEK.

When Hahn appeared, Meek had revived.

'You are a fool!' cried the German angrily. He was feeling very sore. Meek had been the theme of discussion in the officers' mess, and Hahn had had to endure a good deal of heavy raillery on his account. He was told that he had been sent out to catch niggers; why had he burdened himself with a pig of an Englishman? Where had he found the man? How had a solitary Englishman, a seaman, come to be among natives in this remote part of the island? They supposed he had been shipwrecked; then why had Hahn not left the man to meet his fate among cannibals? Hahn was in a difficulty, because he had said nothing about the other white men, told nothing about his rescue by them. His escape from the cannibals, according to his story, had been due to his own ingenuity. He could not satisfactorily account for Meek, and he wished that, instead of bringing him as a prisoner, he had knocked him on the head or shot him at once.

Now, however, he was actuated by another motive. The Englishman, to his vast surprise, had defied him, and his fellow-officers had chaffed him about it. The Englishman's spirit must be broken.

'You are a fool,' he repeated. 'You bring all zis on yourself.. You shall haf food to-night; I am not hard, but you shall be tied up still. It is German discipline.

To-morrow must you vork–understand? You are bad example to ze ozers. Zere is ze night for zinking. You shall zink. In ze morning you shall haf sense, and vork.'

'Never!' cried Meek hoarsely. 'Not coal. Not for German pirates!'

'Pig! I say you shall zink about it all night,' roared Hahn, exasperated. 'To-morrow you shall vork, or I vill shoot you dead. Understand?'

Meek made no reply. Hahn savagely bade Hans give him a little food and order the sentries to keep an eye on him during the night. Then he returned to the beach, and Meek was left to contemplate the prospect of twelve hours' torture before a bullet put an end to it all.

CHAPTER XII
THE LEDGE

About an hour before sunset, two men were warily feeling their way among the boulders that strewed the steep declivity above the ledge. Slowly they moved downwards, rarely rising to their full height, but stooping as they dodged in and out between the largest of the stones, and heeding their feet with strained watchfulness. They were Trentham and Hoole. Grinson, with the rest of their party, had been left in hiding near the burnt village, unwillingly; but Trentham had remarked that his bulky form was ill suited to reconnaissance work; a call would be made on his resources later.

The calm surface of the cove was spread out nearly two hundred feet below them. They could see two of the sheds, a few men moving about, and the seaplane lying high up on the beach; but the Raider, moored near the innermost shore, was at present invisible. Nor could they see the ledge, almost perpendicularly beneath them, but now and then they heard the crack of the overseer's whip, and the crash of coals as they fell upon the beach. In front of them the air was slightly darkened by dust wafted up the face of the cliff.

As they climbed lower they moved still more slowly and cautiously, often pausing to rest. At one of these halts Trentham leant against a large boulder, and started back in haste as it moved, swaying slightly and noiselessly like those rocking stones which are to be found here and there on our coasts, and which, insecurely poised though they seem, are rarely moved from their seats. The risk of disturbing the boulder and betraying his presence brought a momentary pallor

to his cheeks. When they moved on again, they tested every upstanding rock before putting any pressure upon it, and found more than one which very little force would cause to fall.

The boulders gave effective cover from observation from the beach, and the contour of the cliff hid them from the sentry on the cliff path several hundreds of yards away. But presently the descent became steeper; they caught sight of the top of the Raider's wireless mast; the sounds from the ledge and the beach grew more distinct and the dust cloud denser. They seemed to have come to the end of the scattered mass of boulders, and peering over, they saw a fairly smooth slope, too steep to climb, lacking in cover, and ending in a sharp edge between fifty and sixty feet below. Any boulders that in times past may have rolled here had found no lodgment, or, at any rate, must have long since fallen into the cove.

While they were crouching behind the lowest of the boulders, wondering how they could determine the exact position of the prisoners, they heard a shout from beyond the ledge, followed by an answering call, fainter, more distant. They shrank back, half fearing that they had been seen; but the shouts were not repeated, and there was no sign of excitement among the men on the beach.

A few minutes later, apparently from a spot immediately beneath them, came the sound of a voice speaking in loud tones, yet not so clearly that they could distinguish the words. It broke off once or twice, and they listened for an answering voice, but heard none. Then one shouted word struck distinctly upon their ears. 'Pig!' Stretching forward, they strained their hearing. 'You shall zink all night ... shoot you dead. Understand?'

There was silence. Trentham's and Hoole's eyes met.

'Hahn?' murmured Trentham.

Hoole nodded.

'Bullying Meek,' he whispered.

Trentham cast his eye along the irregular line of boulders. A few yards from the spot where they were crouching, two jagged rocks, between four and five feet high and about three feet wide at the base, stood almost parallel with the edge of the slope, and about two feet apart. Crawling to them, Trentham pushed them gently from behind, then more firmly, finally with all his strength. They did not yield by the smallest fraction of an inch. Carefully marking their position, the two men clambered back among the boulders, gained the top of the ridge more quickly than they had descended, and hastened to rejoin their party, guiding themselves by the trunks of trees and bushes which Hoole had been careful to 'blaze' as they came. There was just light enough to see the marks.

When they regained the thicket where they had left the others, Grinson came forward eagerly to meet them.

'Any luck, sir?' he asked anxiously. 'Did ye find Ephraim?'

'We know pretty well where he is,' replied Trentham.

'Safe and sound?'

'That I can't say exactly, but he 's sound enough to make Hahn call him a pig.'

'Pig! A lamb like Ephraim! By thunder, sir, if I get my fingers on that there Hahn I 'll teach him! Ephraim a pig! Blast my–

'Steady, Grinson,' interrupted Hoole. 'Meek isn't damaged by Hahn's abuse. Things are more serious than that. From what we overheard, it's pretty sure that Meek has refused to do something that Hahn ordered.'

'Good lad! I 'll—-'

'Wait. Hahn has given him all night to think it over; he threatens to shoot him.'

Grinson was silenced. His heat was quenched by speechless care. Fixing his eyes anxiously on Trentham, he said quietly:

'Anything you order, sir.'

'We 'll save him if we can,' said Trentham. 'We 've hard work in front of us, but with care and good fortune–by the way, Hoole, can you find your way back in the dark?'

'The moon 's up, my son. She 's riding low, but she 'll last long enough for this stunt, I reckon.'

'Good! Now, Grinson, cut a stout pole from a tree–as strong as you can find, three to four feet long.'

'Ay, ay, sir!' responded the boatswain, whipping out his knife.

While he was gone about his task, Trentham explained to Lafoa, the interpreter, that the position of the prisoners had been roughly located, and asked him to inform the rest of the party. They would have to march to the cliff in the waning moonlight, keeping absolute silence, and be ready to do instantly and exactly what they were ordered. The safety of their chief Flanso and his fellow prisoners would depend on their prompt obedience.

On Grinson's return, Trentham ordered one of the men to unwind the rope from his body, and the boatswain to fasten one end of it to the pole. He then slung the pole over a thick branch of a tree, and bade half the party of natives hang on to it, while Grinson and the other half held the loose end of the rope. The test being satisfactory, and the rope having been wound over the pole, they formed up in single file, and, Hoole leading, set out over their former tracks for the cliff. Not a word was spoken. The bare feet of the natives made no sound; the footsteps of the white men could scarcely have been heard if any watchers had been lurking in the bush. The rays of the moon, near its setting, gave Hoole light enough to distinguish the blazed trees, and they marched rapidly. Presently the prevailing stillness was invaded by the soft rustle of the surf, and they caught sight of the

glistening path of the moonlight stretching far across the sea. Slackening his pace a little, so as to reduce the slight sounds made by the white men's boots, Hoole led the party unerringly to the crest of the boulder-strewn slope. There they halted.

There were whispered explanations and instructions. Grinson, in spite of his anxiety for Meek, was a little daunted by the difficulties of the plan unfolded to him. The exact position of the prisoners on the ledge was unknown. A sentry would certainly be on guard. An incautious movement, the accidental disturbance of a stone, a misjudgment of distance in the dark, might involve not only the failure of the scheme, but death to its authors. Trentham did not minimise the dangers; they had all been canvassed by Hoole and himself; indeed, he was prepared to find that some factor which he had been unable to take into account would render his plan unworkable.

'But we are not going to attempt the impossible, Grinson,' he said. 'We shall first discover what 's possible, and then–well, you 're not the man to jib at a risk.'

'True, sir, and Ephraim is worth it. I 'll say no more.'

They waited until the sinking moon gave just light enough to see the two rocks which Trentham and Hoole had marked on their previous visit; then they stole down the slope among the boulders. For greater security the white men had removed their boots. On reaching the furthermost of the boulders they halted again. Trentham placed the log of wood across the gap between the two rocks, and got Grinson to loop the loose end of the rope under his armpits. When the moon had wholly disappeared below the hills behind, and the face of the cliff was dark, he crawled inch by inch down the bare slope, and peeped cautiously over the edge.

The cove, the beach, the ledge–all were now within his range of vision. His eyes were first attracted by lights below. There was a glimmering lamp on the Raider's deck forward; the deck appeared to be unoccupied, and no lights shone from the portholes. All three sheds were illuminated, and from the murmur of voices Trentham guessed that the Germans were at their evening meal. No one was moving on the beach. Then he noticed a slight intermittent glow some distance away on his right; behind it a face was momentarily lit up. Without doubt it proceeded from the pipe of the sentry on the ledge. Trentham recalled the position as he had seen it from the other side of the cove when he made his first reconnaissance. The sentry was evidently posted at the inner end of the ledge, where one path led to the beach, another wound round the cliff. These were the only avenues of escape; the other end of the ledge was blocked. The fact that the sentry was smoking argued that discipline was less strict here than it would have been on board ship; probably vigilance also was less rigid. What

had the Germans to fear from their cowed slaves, and the natives of the village they had terrorised?

Withdrawing his eyes from this extremity of the ledge, Trentham could just distinguish the outlines of baskets laid against the cliff wall. Then he started, and felt his pulses quicken. Surely that pallid object below him, a little to his left, was a man's face. He closed his eyes, and reopening them after a few moments found that he could see more clearly. Beyond doubt a white man was standing close against the wall. His attitude was peculiarly rigid. The explanation flashed upon Trentham; Meek was tied up.

Trentham looked up and down the ledge for the native prisoners. Black though they were, he expected to be able to discover them, even in the darkness, by some movement or sound. He was as much perplexed as surprised at discerning no sign of them. Where, then, were they kept?

Meek, however, was his first concern. How long had the seaman been tied up? Was he conscious, and able to assist in his release? It was impossible to tell. Wriggling along the edge of the slope until he was exactly over Meek's position, Trentham took a short peg from his pocket, drove it into the soil, and attached to it a thin line of fibre which he had brought with him. Then, holding the line, he crawled carefully up the slope, and rejoined his party.

In a few whispered words he related the extent of his discoveries.

'Better 'n we could expect, sir,' murmured Grinson, with a long breath of relief. 'If the look-out is smoking—-'

'Yes,' interrupted Trentham, 'but we mustn't rely too much on that. He may be relieved at any minute; we can't tell. We must get to work while the men are still feeding. Ready, Hoole?'

'Sure!' was the reply.

Following the guiding line, of which Grinson now held the upper end, the two men crept down the slope. Grinson understood that the line would be used to signal how to deal with the thicker rope, which was coiled round the log laid across the two rocks. When they reached the edge, Trentham transferred the coil of rope from his own arms to those of Hoole, who was to descend first on to the ledge. They were both conscious that this was a critical moment. A fall of earth as the rope strained over the edge could hardly fail to arouse the sentry. A man issuing from one of the sheds might notice, even in the dark, the white clothes of the climber, stained though they were. The first misfortune might be avoided with care; the second was at the mercy of chance.

Hoole felt with his hand for a hard smooth spot upon the edge, over which the rope might pass without risk of displacing earth. Then he peered along the ledge from end to end. The sentry was still smoking; no one was visible but Meek. Sounds of talking came from the shed, punctuated by the regular recurring swish

of the surf.

'Good luck!' Trentham whispered.

Hoole gave three jerks on the thin line he carried, then slid over the edge. The rope tightened under his armpits; the natives above slowly paid it out. He sank out of sight, and it seemed an age to Trentham before two jerks signalled that he had reached the ledge. A few seconds later a single jerk indicated that the rope might be drawn up. When it came over the edge, Trentham instantly passed the loop over his shoulders, repeated the signal for lowering, and in half a minute was standing beside Hoole, close against the cliff wall.

Both were panting with excitement. No fresh sound was added to those they had already heard; their descent had been unperceived.

Each went at once about the task previously agreed on. Hoole took a few paces towards the sentry, and revolver in hand, stood on guard, while Trentham, with quick, silent cuts of his knife, released the half-unconscious seaman.

'Not a word, Meek,' whispered Trentham, as he placed the loop under the man's shoulders. 'Grinson is waiting for you above.'

He jerked on the line. Meek slowly ascended, and his clothes being dark, his form could scarcely be distinguished against the cliff. He had only just disappeared over the edge when a light was suddenly thrown on the beach by the opening of the door of one of the sheds. There was a burst of louder talking, and a group of seamen issued forth, and ambled down to a dinghy lying a few yards above the surf. Hoole and Trentham slipped silently down, and lay flat against the wall. They heard the scrape of the boat as it was hauled over the sand, the clatter of boots as the men climbed into it, then the rattle of oars in the rowlocks. The men were boarding the Raider; from her deck they might see movements on the ledge. Was this to be the end of the adventure?

For a few minutes the voices of the Germans rose from the vessel; then they ceased, and Hoole, raising his head cautiously, saw that the deck was clear.

'Now for the sentry!' he whispered.

Foreseeing that the native prisoners, when they should be discovered and released, might hail their deliverance with shouts of joy, Trentham had arranged with Grinson that Lafoa, the interpreter, should be lowered to the ledge when he gave the signal. But he had not expected any difficulty in finding the prisoners' whereabouts. The presence of the sentry showed that they were somewhere on the ledge, and he felt some anxiety lest they were near the German, and would be disturbed as Hoole went forward to deal with him. For this reason, when Hoole was about to grope his way along the ledge, Trentham detained him by a whisper, and signalled to Grinson by means of the line. A minute later he heard a sound above as the Papuan came dangling down at the end of the rope–a sound so slight that it could not have been heard by the sentry amid the rustle of the

surf. He caught Lafoa about the body, released him from the rope, and then, in the briefest sentences of which pidgin English is capable, instructed him in the part he was to play presently.

Hoole started, stealing along inch by inch under the cliff wall, taking advantage of its inequalities and of the baskets which were ranged in line against it. He had gone forward only about a dozen yards, however, when Trentham, who could just distinguish his form, saw him halt, crouching low. The sentry's pipe was still emitting its glow at regular intervals as the man puffed. It was clear that he had not been disturbed, and Trentham, wondering why Hoole had stopped, stole forward to join him, carrying the rope with which Meek had been bound.

The American was lying almost flat, peering between the bars of a wooden grating that covered a hole in the cliff.

'Listen!' he whispered, as Trentham came up behind him.

And then Trentham heard, from behind the grating, sounds of deep breathing, as of many men asleep. Nothing could be seen in the pitch blackness within; but the two men concluded that they had found the place in which the natives were confined. Worn out by long hours of fatiguing work to which they were unused, the prisoners, no doubt, were sleeping the heavy sleep of exhaustion.

Hoole was about to go forward, when he was arrested by a sound some distance ahead. He dropped flat again, and taking up handfuls of coal dust, rubbed it all over his clothes. Trentham followed his example. They now identified the sound as footsteps; in a few moments they heard a voice, then a tapping.

'Sentry being relieved; knocking out his pipe,' Hoole whispered.

They lay watching, listening, with their hearts in their mouths. Would the Germans come to look at the man they had tied up? Or would the relieving sentry be satisfied by his comrade's report that all was well, and take up his post without investigation? If both should come along the ledge together, it was hopeless to expect that they could be silenced without one or other having time to give the alarm. They might even see the white clothes, in spite of the coating of coal dust, before they came within reach. A single shout would arouse the Germans below, and all would be over.

The footsteps drew nearer; two voices were heard. The new sentry exchanged a few words with his comrade; then the heavy boots of the latter rang on the path leading downwards to the beach. The risk was halved! A match was struck; the newcomer lit his pipe, and for a minute or two paced up and down a short stretch of the ledge. Hoole hoped that he would soon tire of this, and sit, as his comrade presumably had done, smoking placidly, dreaming perhaps of a little cottage somewhere in the Fatherland.

But presently the slow footsteps approached. The scent of tobacco smoke touched the nostrils of the waiting men. The sentry was coming to look at his

prisoner. Trentham and Hoole crawled back silently a few yards, and effaced themselves as well as they could behind the baskets. The German came slowly on, humming between his closed lips. He reached the tunnel, and stood at the grating for a few moments; the watchers saw the reflection of his glowing pipe on his face as he pressed it close against the bars. Humming again, he sauntered on towards the post where Meek had been tied, walking outside the line of baskets, and passing the hidden men within a couple of yards.

Now was the critical moment. Feeling that the whole success of the enterprise hung on the next few seconds, Hoole pulled himself together, got to his feet, and noiselessly on his stocking soles tip-toed after the German. From below came the restless murmur of the surf. Hoole's footsteps could not have been heard, yet the German, perhaps moved by that strange sense one has of being followed, was on the point of turning round, when a hard fist caught him with the force of a sledge-hammer behind his right ear, and he fell like a log. Trentham, who had followed stealthily, instantly dashed forward, and before the stunned man regained consciousness he was bound hand and foot with the rope that had tortured Meek, and a gag, torn from Hoole's coat, was firmly wedged between his teeth.

[image]

NOISELESSLY ON HIS STOCKING SOLES TIP-TOED AFTER THE GERMAN.

Leaving him where he lay, the two men summoned Lafoa to join them, and led him to the tunnel. Groping over the grating, Hoole discovered the wooden bolt with which it was fastened, quietly removed the cover, and signed to Lafoa to go in.

There was another moment of tense anxiety. Grunts, ejaculations, the stir of movement, were heard from the depths of the tunnel. Something fell with a sharp crack–a pick which one of the men had displaced. At the mouth of the tunnel it sounded like a pistol shot, and Hoole and Trentham swung round and looked apprehensively towards the beach. All was still, there. No doubt the wash of the sea was loud enough to smother the single sharp sound at a distance.

It was evident that Lafoa had intelligently grasped his instructions, for the natives, as they filed out, though their movements were quick and urgent, made scarcely a sound. In a long string they followed Trentham to the spot where the rope dangled over the wall of the ledge. Trentham found that his hands were trembling as he slid the rope over the shoulders of the first man. If only he could

have multiplied the rope! Each ascent would take at least half a minute. How many men were there? What might not happen before they were all in safety above? One by one he looped them, saw them rise, caught the descending rope. Hoole, who had counted them out, came up to them and whispered 'Thirty-four.' More than a quarter of an hour must elapse before the last man had ascended, and some of those at the end of the line were showing signs of restlessness, grunting, sighing, clicking with their tongues. Moment by moment Trentham expected some of them to whoop with excitement. 'Make all fella no talkee!' he whispered to Lafoa, and the man went along the line muttering fierce threats.

The thirty-fourth man had gone. Lafoa followed him, then Hoole. Not a sound had been heard from below but the murmur of the sea and the muffled voices of the men in the sheds. With intense relief, and the feeling that fortune could hardly betray them now, Trentham looped himself and signalled to be hoisted. He was barely half way to the top when a sharp clatter above made his blood run cold. Crack followed crack, then for a second there were a number of dull thuds, and finally, a tremendous crash on the ledge below, waking echoes around the cove. One of the natives, in climbing among the boulders, had displaced a large rock.

The doors of the sheds were burst open. Lights shone across the cove. Men came rushing out, calling to one another, to the sentry above, to the men on the Raider. 'Faster! Faster!' Trentham cried inwardly, as he was jerked upward. He was just over the edge when a blinding light swept across the face of the cliff. The searchlight's beams fell full upon Trentham's white-clad form. Slipping out of the loop, he scrambled on hands and knees up the sloping ascent towards the boulders. Below him there was a sputtering rattle, and he felt himself splashed with earth and stones as the rain of machine-gun bullets pecked at the cliff. Something hot stung his leg; he crawled faster; in another moment his shoulders were grasped by sinewy hands, and Grinson and Hoole between them lugged him over the brink and behind the protecting boulders.

'Thanks be for all mercies!' panted Grinson. 'And as for that clumsy lubber that kicked down the rock—-'

'Shoo!' whistled Hoole, 'it's time, sure, to cut and run!'

CHAPTER XIII

A FORCED LANDING

'For goodness' sake keep them quiet!' gasped Trentham, clambering up among the boulders to the top of the slope. The native prisoners, hysterical in their joy, were laughing and shouting and smacking their thighs.

'Say, Lafoa,' said Hoole, 'tell that chief of yours to stop the hullabaloo. Black fella no talkee this time.'

Flanso gathered his men together, and reduced the hubbub somewhat. Meanwhile Trentham had gained the top.

'We must get out of reach at once,' he said. 'The searchlight's no good to them now, nor the machine-gun; but if these fellows make such a row the Germans will track us.'

'We make for the village?' asked Hoole.

'Not directly; the Germans are sure to put men on the paths. But I fancy they won't risk a regular pursuit in the dark, and if we get away from the coast and avoid the direct route to the village, we shall at any rate not run into them. How 's Meek?'

'Just alive, sir, that's all I can say,' replied Grinson. 'What they 've been doing to him—-'

'Can he walk?' Trentham interrupted.

'Says he ain't got no feeling in his legs. But what's the odds? I 'll heave him across my back. Lucky you 're lean, Ephraim, me lad!'

'Come, let's start at once. Where's Lafoa?'

He explained his plan to the interpreter, who imparted it to the young chief, and the whole party moved off silently into the forest, Grinson mounting Meek pickaback.

Trentham's inferences as to the actions of the enemy were better justified than he knew. All the Germans with the exception of Hahn had been thrown into a state of utter consternation by the discovery that Meek was not the only white man in their neighbourhood. Hahn, professing himself to be as much surprised as the rest, had discreetly held his tongue. Consequently the commander, ignorant of the number of the rescuers, had contented himself with posting parties of the crew on the paths which the fugitives must cross to regain their village, postponing organised pursuit until the morning.

It was slow going in the darkness. Several of the natives who had been longest enslaved were weak from overwork, ill-treatment, and confinement. The stronger among them, eager to press on, were restrained by fear of the dark and the necessity of helping the weaker. Hoole noticed that Trentham was limping.

'Hurt your leg?' he asked.

'Got a bullet, I think, but it's nothing.'

'Shucks! Let me have a look at it right now. You might bleed to death.'

He knelt down and groped for the wound.

'The bullet has ploughed up a bit of your calf,' he said in a minute or two. 'Lucky it's no worse. Wait half a second while I tie it up; then I guess you can go on till we strike some water.'

They went on, struggling over rough country amid thick bush and trees. Even the natives were at a loss in the darkness. They could not choose a definite direction, and it seemed obvious to the white men that some of them would soon collapse. Grinson was panting under his load, light though it was, but steadfastly refused to allow the others to take turns with him. At length, coming to a patch of open ground, Trentham called a halt.

'We ought to be pretty safe now,' he said, 'and had better camp here till the morning. With daylight some of the natives will be able to take their bearings.'

They lay down on the rough grass, already wet with dew.

'How d' you feel, Ephraim?' asked Grinson, bending over the seaman.

'I felt worse when I had typhoid,' said Meek faintly. 'What a lot of trouble I do give you, Mr. Grinson–a lot of trouble. And I ain't said a word of thanks to the gentlemen.'

'Don't bother about that,' said Trentham. 'Get to sleep if you can.'

'Ay, go to sleep at once, Ephraim; d' ye hear, me lad?' said Grinson.

'I 'll try, Mr. Grinson, and if so be I dream horrors—-'

'Dream! What's dreams? Why, many's the times I 've been drownded in my sleep. Dreams make me laugh. (I 'll get him off, sir,' he whispered to Trentham. 'A yarn of mine has done it afore now!) I remember once I dreamed as how I 'd got into a Salvation meeting; they was singing a hymn, but the man as played the trumpet–why, somehow the trumpet turned into a beer bottle, and I found I was playing the trumpet myself. They all come up and thanked me afterwards for my beautiful music, and then all of a sudden I was left alone, and couldn't find my hat. While I was hunting for it, that there trumpet fellow rushed in and pushed a rolled-up parcel into my hand. "Very good hat!" says he, and when I opened it, bless you, 'twas nothing but a tea-cosy.... He 's off now, sir. What have those devils been doing to my Ephraim?'

'We 'll hear all about it to-morrow. You had better sleep yourself, Grinson. Tell yourself a yarn.'

'No, sir; that's not my way. I counts over the number of sweethearts I 've had, and by the time I 've got to the third or fourth I 'm dead off; they was so dull.'

It was a comfortless night on the open ground, with neither fires nor wraps to defend them against the chill air. Either Hoole or Trentham was always on guard, together with relays of the natives. By the exertion of his authority Flanso kept his men fairly quiet; but the white men were on thorns lest even the subdued murmurs of voices should reach the ears of possible scouts.

At dawn the party was marshalled. It had been arranged that the weaker men among the natives should make for the village by a round-about route, in charge of Grinson and Meek, and led by Lafoa. Trentham and Hoole intended to wait a while with Flanso and the rest, and then to scout more directly eastward in order to keep watch on the Germans.

They were just about to start when the natives pricked up their ears, and Flanso managed to make the white men understand that they were alarmed by a noise in the air. A few seconds later Hoole declared that he heard the seaplane's engines. Trentham signed to the natives to take cover in the surrounding bush, and with Hoole posted himself at the edge of the forest, where he might hope to escape observation. Presently the seaplane soared over the clearing, a few hundred feet above the ground, and after circling once or twice made off south-eastwards in the direction of the village.

'They won't see our men in the forest,' remarked Trentham, 'but we had better start. If they drop a bomb on the village, there 'll be a frightful panic.'

They hurried among the trees to re-form their party, but found that the natives, scared by the noise of this aerial monster, had disappeared. Only one man remained, Flanso himself, armed with a spear taken from one of those who had accompanied the white men from the village. Under his guidance they set off rapidly.

It was perhaps a quarter of an hour later that Hoole caught sight of a native among the trees on his left hand, and thinking it was one of the missing men, shouted to him. The man at once dashed away, uttering a shrill cry.

'Kafulu!' cried Flanso excitedly, and was on the point of springing after the traitor when a shot rang out, and a number of Germans came into view almost directly in front of them. The three men instantly darted away to the right, pursued by more shots, and ran until they were out of breath.

'We 've outrun them,' said Trentham; 'must have gone twice as fast as they, burdened with their rifles. I must rest a bit; my leg is rather groggy.'

There was no sound of pursuit. Presently they moved on again, but had not gone far before they once more heard the hum of the seaplane, apparently approaching from the south. Screened by the trees, they did not check their march until Hoole suddenly exclaimed:

'Say, Trentham, that machine 's sure in difficulties.'

'Is it? How do you know?'

'Listen!' returned Hoole with a smile.

The humming was intermittent, spasmodic, and presently ceased altogether.

'They 're coming down,' said Hoole, 'and not far away. Let 's have a look at it.'

'Better push on,' said Trentham.

'But it 'll do us good if the machine crashes. I 'd be glad to know it's out of action. Come on!'

They turned in the direction in which the sound was last heard. Through the close-growing trees it was impossible to see far, and Trentham privately thought the search a waste of time; but after only a few minutes' walk they came to the edge of an open space sloping down to a stream some twenty feet wide.

'It will be hereabout,' said Hoole, detaining the others at the top of the slope. 'But I guess this trickle isn't wide enough to float it. Let us separate, and scout along the line of bushes here, up and down stream.'

In a few minutes Flanso, who had gone northward, returned to the others, and told them by signs that he had discovered the machine. Creeping back with him, they came to a bend in the stream, and there discovered the seaplane, resting partly on two small trees, partly on a bed of rushes, and awkwardly tilted. The two airmen had left their seats, and were talking together on the bank, apparently consulting a compass. Every now and again they glanced apprehensively into the bush on both sides. Then they returned to the seaplane, walked round it, put their shoulders against the fuselage, and tried to lift it. One of them took out his revolver, and was on the point of firing it into the air, when his companion hastily interposed. The two men had a brief altercation. Finally the one who had been about to fire appeared to yield to the other's warning, and they both sat down on the shelving bank, discussing the position over again.

Sheltered by the dense vegetation above the watercourse, Trentham and his companions had watched their movements with interest. The tenor of their discussion was easily divined. The seaplane could not be salved without help, but they hesitated to leave it, fearful of its being discovered by the natives, with whom, as they now knew, were white men. If they parted company, which was to return to the cove? The one left would be less able to defend himself and the machine. A revolver shot might have brought assistance from the Germans; on the other hand, it might attract a horde of cannibals. What were they to do?

As they sat on the bank, they were sideways to the three men watching them only a few feet above.

'Let's rush them!' whispered Hoole suddenly.

He seized Flanso's spear, pushed his revolver into Trentham's hand, and before the latter could utter a word, either in assent or in remonstrance, the American was half-way down the slope. Trentham had no choice but to back him up, and he dashed after his friend with scarcely a moment's delay.

The Germans heard the sound of Hoole's movements through the bush, turned their heads and sprang up. One of them raised his revolver to fire, but Hoole, now only three or four yards away, launched his spear. His sudden ac-

tion flurried the German's aim, his shot flew wide, and the next moment he fell back, cursing, and tearing the spear from his shoulder. His companion, seeing Trentham rushing at him with levelled revolver, hesitated a moment, and caught sight of Flanso swooping down immediately behind the Englishman.

[image]

ONE OF THE GERMANS RAISED HIS REVOLVER, BUT BEFORE HE COULD FIRE, HOOLE LAUNCHED THE SPEAR AT HIM.

'Hands up!' cried Trentham, taking advantage of the man's momentary hesitation.

Up went his hands.

'Guess we 'll borrow your revolvers, gentlemen,' said Hoole, picking up the weapon dropped by the wounded man. Trentham took the other man's from his belt. 'Keep your eye on them, Trentham,' Hoole went on, 'while I kind of size up this machine of theirs.'

Trentham and Flanso stood guard over the Germans while the unwounded man bathed his comrade's arm and bound up his wound. Meanwhile Hoole examined the seaplane in a manner that took Trentham by surprise. There was a sureness, a purposefulness about him; he seemed to know exactly what he was looking for. Indeed, he pulled the engine about, as Trentham afterwards told him, as if he were its maker. A very few minutes' inspection sufficed to make him wise, as he put it.

'Not much wrong,' he said, coming over to Trentham and smiling. 'I guess I can put it right. But we 'll want help to get it on to the stream–yonder there, where it widens. Shall we start for home?'

'And these gentlemen will come as our prisoners?'

'Sure. We haven't any coal for them to dig, but they can start on yams.'

'Ve are officers; it is not correct for officers to vork,' said one of the Germans.

'Say, is that so? You 're a lazy lot? Well now! And yet you 'll make a chief dig coal for you–a chief who 's as big a man here as your Kaiser in Berlin. Well, you surprise me! Come along, Trentham. Let's hurry.'

'How far are we from the coast?' asked Trentham of the Germans as they started.

'Eight or nine mile,' was the surly response.

'Bully!' exclaimed Hoole. 'With luck we 'll have time to salve the machine before it's found. Step along, Flanso!'

'Ze niggers vere ve go–are zey cannibals?' asked one of the Germans anx-

iously.

'Yes,' replied Trentham. 'They nearly ate us. They mistook us for Germans.'

The prisoners asked no more questions.

Soon after leaving the seaplane, Hoole pointed out why it had come down in this part of the forest. The stream widened into a small lake, on which, when their engine failed, the Germans had tried to alight. Unable to reach it, they had been forced to come down on the bank of the stream.

Flanso scouted ahead, every now and then stopping to listen for signs of the Germans. Once, when they were rounding a spur where the vegetation was thin, Trentham clapped his hand over the mouth of one of the Germans just as he was about to shout.

'We 'll have to gag this fellow, Hoole,' he said.

'Sure. Another rag from my coat. And look you here, you officers, if you make a sound, barring a natural grunt, we 'll leave you to our friend Flanso. See?'

'The native yonder,' explained Trentham. 'You had him on your ledge, you know.'

The threat was enough. For the rest of the march the Germans were docility itself.

CHAPTER XIV
AN INTERLUDE

At the entrance to the village the returning party found Grinson alone, standing in the middle of the path, his knife in his right hand, a spear in his left, and a dozen other spears on the ground beside him. Neither Meek nor any of the natives was to be seen.

'What's the meaning of this, Grinson?' asked Trentham.

'Ignorance, sir–just ignorance, poor heathens!' replied the boatswain, cocking his thumb towards the village. 'That there airy plane sailed over a while ago, and the savages all did a bunk, screeching like one o'clock, though I roared myself black in the face telling 'em 'twas only a sort o' bird. 'Twas no good; like as I 've seed cows and sheep bolt with their tails up from a railway train. They was scared stiff, there 's no mistake; and I 'spect they 're hiding their heads somewhere.'

'And Meek?'

'I sent Ephraim straight into our hut, sir, and seeing as how the whole place was left undefended, like, I took up my station here. Germans, sir?' he added in a whisper, winking towards the prisoners.

'Yes; their machine came down. We 'll leave them in your charge, as we want to take a gang back to bring in the machine. You had no trouble on the way home?'

'Not a bit, sir, except that they 've no notion whatever of the proper way of marching–more like a lot of colts they was; but there, I hadn't the heart to correct 'em, they was so uncommon pleased to be free again.'

The party had not interrupted their march. Grinson had picked up his spears and fallen in step beside Trentham. As they passed along the path, from behind the huts and the midst of the plantations native heads appeared one by one, and when the timorous people recognised their young chief they came bounding out with yells of delight, until by the time the inner enclosure was reached the whole population had joined the procession. At the gate the patricians were assembled, headed by the temporary chief. They welcomed Flanso with some show of dignity, and conducted him to the chief's house, bowing low as he entered the doorway. The two prisoners were placed under guard in an empty hut, and then Trentham hurried after Flanso, and with the aid of the interpreter explained the course of action which had been arranged between himself and Hoole during the homeward march.

Trentham found himself contending with the natives' absolute incomprehension of the value of time. Flanso was already occupied in discussing with his elders the details of his approaching installation. No western monarch could have been more deeply absorbed in the ceremonies that were to inaugurate his reign. The hardships from which he had been rescued, the dangers that still threatened him and his people, seemed to have vanished from his mind, and it was only by dint of patience and pertinacity that Trentham succeeded in capturing his attention.

He pointed out that the Germans, enraged at the loss of their prisoners, would certainly seek to regain them, and also to wreak vengeance upon the community; nor would their animus be lessened when they discovered that their airmen had fallen into the enemy's hands.

'Chief say Toitsche fella no belongina find out that,' said the interpreter, after an interruption from Flanso. 'Black fella belongina eat white fella chop-chop.'

'Tell chief what he say all belongina gammon,' cried Trentham, and proceeded to explain as well as he could from the slender resources of pidgin English that the Germans might be valuable at least as hostages. It took some time to get this theory understood and accepted; then it was an equally long and difficult

task to persuade him that the seaplane would be of any value to him. What was the good of it? It only frightened his people. To fetch it involved the risk of falling into the power of the Germans. Trentham managed to make him understand that the loss of the machine would greatly cripple the enemy's operations; and further, that if Hoole succeeded in repairing it, it might be used to bring help from friendly white men, who would eat up the Germans, and deliver the natives for ever from them. Flanso was rather impressed by these statements, though he said that his people would probably prefer to eat up all the Germans themselves; and Trentham realised the danger of employing metaphorical language. Ultimately he brought Flanso to concede his request–to despatch a party of able-bodied men to transport the seaplane from its present position to the village.

'I feel utterly done up,' he said, mopping his brow, when he returned to the others. 'Jabbering pidgin English for an hour is worse than penal servitude. And it's such frightful loss of time; the Germans may have discovered the machine by now.'

'Don't worry,' said Hoole. 'It was flying so low that I guess they couldn't have seen it come down, and when they miss it they may hunt for it for a day or two in the forest and not find it, except by a fluke. I don't figure out that they 'll have all the luck. Anyway, choose your men, and I 'll take 'em out; you 've done your share of the business. I 'll take Grinson, he 's a hefty man, and may have a notion or two.'

Fortunately the chief's obstinacy had no counterpart among the Papuans outside the enclosure. The released prisoners had done nothing since their return except relate over and over again the details of their sufferings and the manner of their escape. Their friends listened awestruck to the tale, and gasped as they heard of the dangling rope, the lightning which had gleamed upon the cliff, the crackling thunder, the strange stones that flew singing through the air; and they looked with wondering admiration upon the white men who had saved their fellows, not only from the tyrants who had enslaved them, but even from the powers of nature which those tyrants had at command. Trentham and Hoole thus found themselves to be regarded with veneration, and when the interpreter, prompted by Trentham, explained that the white men required the services of twenty strong men to bring in the great sea-bird which was another part of the enemy's magic, there was no lack of volunteers eager to undertake the work. Another score were selected as scouts, and when these understood that the object to be carried was bulky, and could not easily be conveyed through thick forest, they announced that they knew a way less obstructed by vegetation, which would be more convenient, though less direct.

Under their guidance the party reached the stream some distance above the spot where the seaplane lay. Feeling their way cautiously along the bank,

they came at length in sight of the machine, which to all appearance remained exactly as it had been left. Hoole took the precaution to post a screen of scouts around the position to give warning if the enemy should approach, then he sent Grinson to detach the wings. A handy man, like all British seamen, Grinson soon accomplished his task, with the aid of tools discovered among the airmen's outfit. Within a shorter space of time than Hoole had deemed possible the work was finished. The wings were entrusted to two men apiece; the body of the machine was hoisted on the shoulders of the rest of the party; and although they met with considerable difficulties at rough and steep places on the return journey, once being saved from catastrophe only by the succour of Grinson's sturdy muscles, they bore their burden without mishap to the village, and carried it up the central path amid the joyous shouts of the populace. Some of the men, now that the strange bird was evidently helpless, showed their bravery by casting their spears at it, and their dexterity by failing to hit any of the bearers. At this Hoole fairly lost his temper, and rushed among the throng, smiting them right and left with his fists. This unusual mode of correction was effectual. The men who were sent spinning picked themselves up with an air of surprise, while their comrades shouted with laughter, in which the culprits themselves by and by joined. For safety's sake Hoole had the machine carried into the inner enclosure, where it was inspected with more decorum and shyness by the patricians, and with contempt by the medicine-man, who demonstrated his assurance by stroking the petrol tank and afterwards licking his greasy fingers. The grimaces he made were so much like those he was accustomed to display for professional purposes that his discomfort passed unnoticed except by the white men.

Trentham came out of his hut rubbing his eyes.

'Yes, I 've been asleep,' he said, in answer to Hoole's inquiring look. 'A pretty warden of the camp I should make. But the fact is, these people are hopeless. I tried to make them understand that the Germans might be upon us at any minute–no good! They appear to be entirely taken up with some sort of mumbo-jumbo, and can't attend to anything else. So I simply gave in, trusting that if the Germans did appear the people would be scared into reasonableness. The wall, of course, is proof against anything less than a four-pounder.'

'Well, I guess you did right,' said Hoole, 'and after thirty odd hours without it, a little sleep would comfort me some. As to the Germans, I 'm pretty sure they 'll do a bit of reconnoitring before they attack. The surprise of those two airmen wasn't put on; it's clear that Hahn said nothing about us, and they 'll be wondering how many there are of us. And so, my son, we must persuade Flanso to keep some scouts out with their eyes lifting. With proper notice we could put up some sort of defence. But I hope we 'll get away before it comes to that.'

'You can repair the machine, then?'

'I reckon I can, if I can get hold of a forge. But I 'm dead tired, so I 'll turn in, if you 'll keep your eyes open a while. So long!'

That evening, as the four men sat together once more in their hut, the two younger drew from Meek the story which he had already related to Grinson on the way home. It was a very colourless narrative–a recital of the cold facts in the fewest possible words, without a touch of passion or indignation. Grinson, however, was not the man to leave his mate's story unadorned.

'He 's an 'ero, gentlemen, that's what Ephraim is!' he declared. 'If ever he gets back to the old country, I lay the name of Ephraim Meek–ay, and his picter too–will be in all the newspapers. I 'll see to that. And the cinemas too; by gosh, I hear 'em now, the cheers of the little kiddies and the sobs of the women and gals when they see Ephraim tied up, like that chap as defied the lightning, bidding of them German ruffians to do their worst; he 'd never dig coal for them, not him! P'r'aps one of you young gentlemen will make a pome out of it, like that one about "the boy stood on the burning deck," you remember, or one I used to know years ago when I went to school, about a British Tommy. I don't rightly recollect it, but 'twas a Tommy in some heathen land as wouldn't bob his head to an idol, or thing of the sort, though they killed him for it. 'Twud be a shame if Ephraim wasn't put into some pome too–an 'ero like him!'

'I ain't got the figger of an 'ero, Mr. Grinson,' said Meek. 'Now if it was you–a-going off singing to be eat–that 'ud made a picter. I couldn't sing if 'twas me–I 'm sure I couldn't.'

'Why, that was only like a sheep bleating on the way to the slaughter-house–'eroes don't baa. Ain't I right, gentlemen?'

'What do you say, Hoole?' said Trentham, feeling somewhat at a loss.

'Well,' drawled Hoole, 'I guess heroes ain't *cheap*, anyway, and I 'm proud to know two, that's sure.'

CHAPTER XV
DUK-DUK

Trentham took turns with Hoole and Grinson to keep watch through the night, leaving Meek to the recuperative force of sleep. No untoward incident disturbed the hours of darkness, but there was a good deal of noise in the village, the men chattering incessantly.

'Reminds me of the meetings of our old Urban District Council,' remarked Grinson once, when Hoole relieved him. 'Fust one, then another, then all together–and nothing settled after all.'

'I guess they 're fixing something,' replied Hoole. 'In my country there 's a good deal of clack when we elect a new president. It's a new chief here, you know.'

'Which it means a coronation, p'r'aps, or a beano of some sort, sir. Well, we 'll see, if we live long enough. Good night, sir.'

Hoole had taken the precaution to have the seaplane placed near the hut. In the morning, as soon as it was light, he made a more thorough examination of the machine than had been possible before.

'What precisely is wrong with it?' asked Trentham.

'Luckily not much,' said Hoole. 'These Huns are no sports or they 'd have risked the few miles back to the cove. A couple of flying wires are broken–that 's nothing–but see here, the water jacket round this cylinder is cracked; the water (for cooling purposes, of course) will all run out, and cause the engine to overheat. That's why they came down, though, as I said, I 'd have risked it; all the same, it wouldn't be safe to risk a flight of any length, and the thing must be repaired. The mischief is, we 've got no solder, and you can't mend a crack in metal without that, or something equivalent.'

'But you said, when you first saw it, that it *could* be repaired.'

'Well, yes, I did; forgetting for the moment where we are. You haven't seen anything in the shape of a forge anywhere around, have you?'

'No, but I suppose they must have one, or they couldn't make their spears. I 'll ask the interpreter.'

But the word *forge* was unknown to the interpreter, and Trentham's effort to explain in pantomime, by blowing an imaginary pair of bellows, proved fruitless.

'Well, I 'll go and look around,' said Hoole. 'And meanwhile, old son, don't you think you 'd better persuade the chief to send out some scouts? If the Germans do have a notion to attack us, five minutes' warning would give us time to get every one inside the wall.'

'I 'll try. He may be more amiable than he was last night.'

Hoole perambulated the village for some time before he discovered what he sought. At last, however, within a narrow enclosure behind the huts, he noticed a young man sitting on a frame-like chair, and vigorously working two long sticks up and down. A low fence prevented Hoole from seeing the object of these energetic movements, but a little smoke and an acrid smell like that which comes from a blacksmith's forge drew him nearer, and looking over the fence, his eyes gleamed at what he saw.

In front of the native stood two long cylinders of bamboo, about three feet high. From a hole in the base of each ran a thin bamboo pipe; the two pipes converged and met at a small heap of glowing charcoal, which burnt more brightly with each thrust of the sticks as the native worked them alternately up and down in the cylinders. Hoole jumped over the fence, and eagerly examined this primitive forge. At the lower end of each of the sticks was fastened a huge bunch of feathers, resembling a mop; and these, pumped up and down, caused a considerable draught, by means of which the smith blew his fire to a heat sufficient to soften iron.

'Eureka!' cried Hoole, exulting.

He dashed back to the chief's enclosure, got his permission to have the forge brought within the wall, and in half an hour was busily engaged in the preliminary work of repairing the water jacket.

'It will be done by this evening,' he explained to Trentham. 'To-morrow I 'll be off to Wilhelmshafen or any other old place where I can find a white man, and then—-'

'There 's enough petrol?'

'Enough for the flight out; I 'll get more when I land. Say, though, we shall have to take the machine to the sea. She can't run off, has only floats. That's a pity–waste of time, not to speak of the risk of coming up against the Germans.'

'But there 's an opportunity of getting the machine carried to the sea without a special journey. I 've heard some news while you were away. It appears that some sort of ceremony inaugurating the new chief is to take place at our old wreck to-night. All these Frenchified men are going with him in procession, with a certain number of the other fellows. We must get him to let his men carry the 'plane at the same time.'

'They go down the chimney?'

'Yes; it's the nearest way.'

'The narrow way that leads to destruction! How on earth are we to get the machine down there?'

'With ropes, man. We 've tested the quality of their ropes already, and the women work so uncommonly fast that they 'll have new ropes the right length in plenty of time. I 'll go and see the chief about it at once. He 's very much preoccupied, and vastly self-important, but he allowed me to send out scouts, as you suggested, and I dare say I can talk him over.'

Flanso was quite willing that the seaplane should form part of his procession. His vanity appeared to be flattered; he was as much pleased as a Lord Mayor of London who has secured some novelty for his show. But when the carriers had been chosen, an unforeseen difficulty arose. The medicine-man, whose office gave him access to the chief at all times, strutted into Flanso's house, where

the elders of the community were discussing the details of the approaching ceremony, and vigorously protested against the seaplane being allowed to leave the village. In a vehement oration he declared that the strange bird must have some connection with the totem of the tribe, and that while it remained with them the village would be safe from hostile attack. Some of the elders backed him up, and Flanso, torn between his own superstitions and his sense of loyalty to the white men who had rescued him, sought relief from his perplexities by sending for Trentham, and putting the case before him.

Trentham had sufficient diplomacy to conceal his amusement, and also a certain irritation at the threat to his scheme.

'Tell chief,' he said to the interpreter, 'medicine-man fella he savvy lot. Big bird belongina totem all right; all same big bird he fly long way, bring back lot of white fella; they fight bad white fella this side, eat bad white fella all up.'

At this moment, unluckily, one of the scouts returned with the report that the big ship no longer lay in the cove, and that all the white fellas had disappeared. Grinning with triumph, the medicine-man instantly claimed that this fact proved his case; the loss of the big bird had evidently rendered the enemy helpless, and there was nothing further to be feared from them. Trentham, surprised as he was at the departure of the Raider, and suspecting that the Germans were probably setting a trap, strained his vocabulary of pidgin to the utmost to counteract the medicine-man's arguments, and ultimately prevailed on the chief to abide by the promise he had given. The medicine-man and his supporters were patently annoyed. They left the hut in undisguised ill-humour, and Trentham had an uneasy feeling that they would still give trouble.

The procession was to start soon after sunset, so that it might reach the wreck in time for the ceremony to take place at the height of the moon. It was late in the afternoon before Hoole had completed his repairs, and after making a good meal the four white men were sitting in their tent, awaiting the moment for starting.

'What's up, Trentham?' asked Hoole. 'You look very sick.'

'I 've been thinking we 're mugs, that's all,' said Trentham. 'With the chief and all his fighting men away, and us too, what defence has the village if the Germans take it into their heads to attack?'

'Gee! I 've been so busy that I hadn't given it a thought. But the Germans are out for slaves; they won't find any able-bodied men here.'

'That's true; but you saw what they did to that village in the forest. They 're capable of burning the whole place down, and shooting the women and children, from sheer revenge and spite. Hadn't we better wait till the chief returns before we start on our own scheme?'

For a few moments Hoole pondered in silence.

'The Raider has gone,' he said at length. 'This means that there can't be many Germans left behind; for, of course, they haven't all gone. If the natives didn't see any, it's because they 're still searching in the woods for the seaplane. Is it likely that the few left will attack? There is a risk, I admit, and my proposition is that you remain here with Meek and give an eye to things, while I take Grinson to fix on the planes and see me off. The sooner I get help the better, and the opportunity seems too good to be missed. What do you say?'

'Very well. I should have liked to see the ceremony, but–we simply can't leave the most helpless of the people to the Huns' tender mercies. What in the world is this?'

At this exclamation the others, whose backs were towards the gate, turned about. Through the gate was filing an extraordinary procession.

'By cripes!' said Grinson. 'Is it Jack in the Green, or Guy Fawkes Guy?'

A line of a dozen uncouth figures was slowly approaching. Above legs bared to the thighs bulged a mass of leaves nine or ten feet in circumference, crowned by a headdress like a candle extinguisher, from which rose a pole, fantastically coloured, four or five feet in height, with tufts of feathers and leaves at the top. Except the legs, no part of the human form could be seen.

These strange figures came slowly across the enclosure, until they reached the seaplane, the chief and all his men watching them in dead silence. Encircling the machine, they stooped until the leaves touched the ground; then, at a harsh cry from their leader, they leapt into the air and began to dance; their leafy clothing rustled; the poles wobbled and swayed; their legs bent and straightened; and as they swung round and round the seaplane they uttered shrill cries ever increasing in intensity. The white men looked on in amazement. What was the meaning of these antics? Flanso and his men seemed to be impressed. Trentham beckoned to the interpreter.

'What all this?' he asked.

'This duk-duk,' replied the man in an awed whisper.

'Duk-duk! What is duk-duk?'

'Big medicine. Duk-duk dance; that say big bird no go away; white fella all belongina afraid.'

Hoole whistled.

'That's the stunt, is it? By gosh, Trentham, it must be that old medicine-man thinking he 'll scare us stiff. He 's gotten a kind of affection for the machine. Well, Grinson, come along with me.'

He rose slowly, walked towards the seaplane, dodging between two of the dancers, and got into the seat behind the engine. Grinson had followed him.

'Just go to the propeller, Grinson,' he said, 'and swing it round five or six times when I give you the wink.'

The dancers had drawn closer to the machine, yelling more shrilly than ever. Hoole watched them with a smile as they circled round. Suddenly he gave the sign; Grinson caught the propeller, and with a heave of his brawny arm swung it about. Hoole nodded to him to step aside. The leader of the dance was just approaching, when there was a roar; Hoole had started the engine, and the propeller whizzed round with ever-increasing velocity. The dancer stopped short; before he could collect himself or retreat the air set in motion by the whirring propeller smote him with hurricane force, stripping the leaves from his body, and whirling his headdress, pole and all, across the enclosure. There stood revealed the lean, naked form of the medicine-man. He threw up his hands as if to defend his face from the blast; then, with a yell of fury, he sprinted to the gate, followed by the rest of the dancers.

[image]

THE LEADER OF THE DANCERS WAS JUST APPROACHING WHEN THERE WAS A ROAR, AND THE WHIRRING PROPELLER SET UP A HURRICANE WHICH CAUGHT AT HIS DRESS.

A great roar of laughter burst from the spectators, hitherto silent, and from the crowd which had gathered outside.

'I guess the duk-duk won't quack so loud in future!' said Hoole, rejoining the others.

The medicine-man's attempt to retain the seaplane and demonstrate his own importance had ignominiously failed. His erstwhile supporters had no more to say. The carriers were called up; the chief's procession was formed, and when the red moon rested on the horizon they set forth solemnly towards the ancestral wreck.

CHAPTER XVI
FLIGHT

'I don't think nothing of this 'ere percession, sir–nothing at all,' said Grinson, tramping beside Hoole. 'It ain't my idea of a percession–not by a long chalk. I 've seed hundreds of Lord Mayor's Shows, and King George a-going to be crowned.

They was somethink like–everybody moving like clockwork, 'cept the horses, and they did their best. But these 'ere cannibals ain't got a notion o' keeping step. Look at 'em! What's the good of their drums, I 'd like to know? Why don't they tap out the left-right, as you may say, so 's they will march proper?'

'Well, I guess they 're children of nature,' said Hoole with a smile.

'Brought up very bad, then, that's all I can say, sir. I 'm glad I 'm not a child of nature, but of respectable parents, and uncles and aunts the same. My old Aunt Maria, now, she was real respectable, and no mistake. I used to go and see her when I was a nipper. Fust thing she 'd do, she 'd wipe me nose. It ain't much of a nose–not like Ephraim's–p'r'aps he didn't have his wiped so often, so it growed better.... Why, save us, sir–did you hear that?'

Both the men turned round. From the rear of the procession came the cry of a white man in mortal peril. The moonlight, striking along the leafy avenue through which they were passing, revealed the hideously painted faces of the Papuans, some of whom were carrying live pigs for the feast on the shore. Again rose the startling cry. The two men, stepping among the trees to avoid hindering the march, walked back quickly, and presently saw, among the black faces, the pale, terrified features of the German prisoners, whom rough hands were dragging along at the tail of the procession. An explanation of their presence flashed upon Hoole. Baulked of their human prey before, the cannibals had determined that this time the custom of their tribe should be followed. The inauguration of their chief should not pass without its human sacrifice.

'Hi, you blackguards! What about my goose?' cried Grinson, and was rushing to the rescue when Hoole detained him.

'It's no use tackling these hobos,' said the latter. 'They 'd fly at you like dogs. Keep pace with them; I 'll run on and talk to the chief.'

Hoole sprinted up the line, past the Papuans, carrying food and cooking-pots, past the drummers and the men who bore the seaplane, past spearmen and dancers, and the retinue of patricians who followed immediately behind Flanso. Laying a hand on the chief's arm, he remembered that the interpreter had been left in the village, and wondered nervously how he was to make Flanso understand. To speak in English would be useless; he knew but a word or two of the native language. Suddenly he remembered the chief's remote French extraction, and the impression made on his father by Trentham's use of French. Could that be turned to account? To explain in French what he desired was beyond him, even if Flanso could understand a continuous speech; what alternative was there? Perhaps if he could remember some French–a French poem, say–and declaim it with appropriate gestures, it might produce the moral effect which was the first necessity at the moment. Hoole was a good elocutionist and amateur actor. Racking his memory for things learnt at school, he could recall but one

poem, a song of Béranger's that had taken his fancy. He posted himself at the head of the procession, and facing Flanso, spread his arms to signify that no further advance was to be made. Impressed by his determined mien, the natives halted. And then Hoole, raising himself to his full height, began to recite:

'Il était un roi d'Yvetot,
Peu connu dans l'histoire.'

Rolling the r, he pointed dramatically to the moon,

'Se levant tard, se couchant tôt,
Dormant fort bien sans gloire.'

Here he shot out his right hand towards the village. The natives gasped.

'Et couronné par Jeanneton
D'un simple bonnet de coton:
Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!
Quel bon petit roi c'était là!
La, la!'

He accompanied the refrain with a rhythmical clapping of hands; then, without waiting for the mystic effect to dissipate itself, he grasped the chief by the arm, and led him back along the halted line to the spot where the Germans stood paralysed in the hands of their captors. French, he feared, would hardly serve him now; but he pointed to the prisoners, and repeated '*Pas manger; pas manger!*' in a fiercely authoritative voice, winding up with *'En arrière!'* and pointing towards the village, from which they had come but a quarter of a mile. Then, stepping firmly up to the group of Papuans, he seized the arm of a big man who clutched one of the Germans, and with a dexterous twist forced him to relax his hold. The men snarled, but Flanso, who by this time had apprehended what the white man was driving at, sternly ordered the prisoners to be released.

'You must take them back, Grinson,' Hoole said. 'Their hands are tied; I 'll fasten them to you so that they can't get away. Take them back and hand them over to Mr. Trentham; then catch us up. Bring Lafoa back with you.'

'Ay, ay, sir. I 'll take a spear, case of accident. And I won't be long behind you.'

Hoole, sweating at every pore, as he afterwards said, gave an off-hand indication of approval to Flanso, and the march was resumed.

It was a slow and wearisome journey through the forest, and Grinson, accompanied by the interpreter, caught up the procession before it had advanced another mile. Many times the bearers of the seaplane had to rest; in some places trees and shrubs had to be cut down to allow its passage, and Hoole had many an anxious moment, fearing that the wires would be bent or broken through the carelessness of his inexperienced carriers. But the edge of the cliff was reached without serious mishap, and in a much shorter time than he had believed to be possible. The route chosen by Flanso was in fact shorter by many miles than that by which Hahn had led the party weeks before.

The covering over the top of the chimney had been removed, and Flanso and his men nimbly climbed down one by one. Hoole allowed all to descend except the carriers, Grinson, and the interpreter; then he set to work to ensure the safe lowering of the machine and its detached planes. With the interpreter's aid he got the men to make a stout platform of saplings extending some feet beyond the edge of the cliff, with a hole at the chimney top. The body of the machine was secured to two stout ropes which were carried round trees. Hoole had a third rope with a sling in which to put his feet, and this he tied firmly to a trunk.

'Now, Grinson,' he said, 'you will be in charge here, and woe betide you if you fail me! I 'm going to let myself down into the chimney. When I give the word, lift the machine gently over the cliff and lower away; I 'll keep an eye on it and fend it off the rocks. That's all clear?'

'As clear as good beer, sir, and I only wish I had some, I 'm that dry. Ephraim says there 's—-'

'Oh, hang Ephraim! Stand by!'

He swung himself into the chimney and shouted 'Lower away.'

'The next ten minutes,' he told Trentham afterwards, 'were an age–an epoch. I heard Grinson yo-hoing to the natives above; he never stopped for a moment. How he managed to control those savages I don't know. Down came the machine, and there was I, swinging on the rope, clinging with one hand while I guided the machine with the other. Once it dropped suddenly on one side, and I feared the whole caboodle would crash to the ground; but Grinson bellowed like a hurricane, the thing righted itself, and my heart was banging against my ribs like a steam hammer. Well, we got the fuselage down at last; the planes were a simpler proposition, and by and by Grinson joined me on the beach, as proud as a peacock. "I done that in fust-rate style, sir," says he with a broad grin. "You can bear me out, sir."'

Hoole was so much occupied in putting the machine together by the light of the moon that he saw little of the native ceremony. There was drumming and dancing; at one moment the chief, followed by a group of his men, marched

solemnly to the wreck, and after tramping seven times round the broken mast, descended to the cabin. On his return he was welcomed with a frenzied shout. Then fires were lighted under the cooking-pots, the dance was kept up until the viands were ready, and the feast was prolonged until the moon had travelled half-way round the sky. Satiated, the natives flung themselves on the sand and slept.

'Well, sir,' said Grinson, sitting beside Hoole, close under the cliffs, 'all I can say is, it's a wonder to me how they could stow away so much boiled pork without mustard or a pint of beer.'

Morning dawned. Hoole had the seaplane carried down to the sea. The tide was rising; the sea was choppy; waves of considerable size were breaking on the beach.

'I hope she 's seaworthy, sir,' said Grinson, eyeing the machine anxiously.

'That we 'll soon discover,' replied Hoole. 'You know what you have to do. When I 've pumped up and sucked in, you 'll give the propeller half a dozen turns; then I 'll switch on, and you 'll skip away, or you 'll get a dose like the medicine-man.'

The whole body of natives was lined up on the beach, watching the white men with simple curiosity. Suddenly one of them gave a shout, and pointed out to sea.

'By the powers, sir, here's the Blue Raider,' cried Grinson.

The vessel had appeared round the western horn of the bay, and was standing in as close as possible to the shore.

'They must have seen us,' said Hoole. 'Rank bad luck! Think I 'd pass for one of the Germans, Grinson? They 're too far off to distinguish features.'

'You might, sir, though I 'm ashamed to say it; but what about me? I 'm a good deal too broad in the beam.'

'But you 're half in the water. I 'll try making signs, just to keep 'em quiet, for if they 're suspicious and get their guns on to me, I 'm a dead man, sure!'

Partly concealed by the overshadowing planes, Hoole waved his arms in imitation of the Morse signals. From the vessel, which had now hove to, a boat was lowered, and pulled towards the beach.

'Now, Grinson, I must cut,' said Hoole. 'I 'll start towards them; that will diddle them, I hope; and before they make up their minds I 'm an enemy, I guess I 'll be out of range. Ready?'

Grinson whirled the propeller; Hoole made contact and switched on, the engine started with a roar, and the seaplane glided forward in the direction of the approaching boat. Cries of wonder broke from the throng of natives as the strange bird rose into the air. When clear of the water it turned suddenly eastwards, and flew rapidly at a low altitude along the coast. The boat stopped. A

signal was fired from the vessel in the offing. The seaplane continued on its eastward course. There was a loud report which sent the natives scurrying to the foot of the cliff, and a shell burst a few yards behind the seaplane. A few moments later a shell dropped on the beach, sending up a great shower of sand and rocks. The natives scattered, some making for the chimney, others taking cover among the rocks and undergrowth. Grinson stood for a while with arms akimbo at the edge of the beach, as though defying the gunners; then a crackle of rifle fire from the boat sent him too rushing for the chimney. He had only just reached it when a shell fell plump into the wreck, scattering its timbers far and wide. A howl of wrath and dismay burst from the natives, and they began to swarm up the chimney, full in view of the occupants of the boat, but concealed from the Raider by a bulge in the cliff. Bullets rained on the rocks, but the rolling of the boat rendered marksmanship difficult, and only one or two of the men suffered slight wounds as they climbed up. Grinson was the last to leave the beach. When he reached the summit he stood for a moment or two on the platform, gazing with a grim smile at the Raider.

'Blue you are, and well you may look it!' he cried. 'Row back, you lubbers; such darned bad shooting I never did see, and I 'll take my davy as your goose 'll soon be cooked. Mr. Hoole has gone to fetch the sauce. Ahoy, ugly mugs! Wait for me! I don't want to be marooned in this 'ere forest.'

And he set off at a trot to overtake the natives, who were already disappearing among the trees.

CHAPTER XVII
THE ATTACK ON THE VILLAGE

In the haste of their flight from the dangerous beach the natives had left drums, cooking-pots, and other impedimenta behind, and had now nothing but their weapons to carry. Marching light, they showed a most ungentlemanly want of consideration for Grinson. 'They 're no gentlemen, Ephraim, me lad, that's flat,' he said later (they had gone several miles before he overtook them), 'and me panting and sweating like any think! I must 'a lost five pounds, if an ounce.'

As soon as he had recovered breath, he took place by Flanso's side at the head of the procession, and quite unaware that he was transgressing etiquette, kept pace with the chief, conversing by the way.

'What I can't make out, Flanso, old man,' he said, 'is what this Mr. Hoole is–what he was brought up to, like. He 's only a nipper, so to speak it, 's far as years go, and by his own account he was just larking round these 'ere seas, with more money than wits, *I 'd* say. Well, then, what I want to know is, how does he know about these 'ere airyplanes or seaplanes, or whatever you call 'em, handles 'em as easy as I might handle a ship's boat, and no gammon? I know you don't understand a word of what I'm saying, matey, not being born such; but I 'm just letting off steam, d' ye see? In course I wouldn't say all this to the young gent's face, my manners being good as a general rule; but it ain't good to keep your thoughts bottled up, like, 'cos they might bust out sudden like the cork out of a bottle o' beer that's stood too near the fire, and then where 'd we be, Flanso, me boy?'

Flanso appeared to be gratified by the seaman's speech, and smiled amiably.

'You ain't half a bad-looking chap, Flanso, and if you 'd take that stick out of your nose and learn to wash yourself you 'd be quite handsome. 'Tis a strange world, and no mistake. There 's my Ephraim, a good lad as cleans hisself regular like a true Christian, and speaks English as well as I does myself, but nobody could say he 's a beauty; and then there 's you–'orrible dirty, speaks like a monkey, and yet got a face on you as would make your fortune if so be you went into the Guards.

'Things is arranged very rum, Flanso, and there 's no understanding of 'em. Them two Germans, now–they 're pretty enough with their blue eyes and flaxen hair, just the sort the girls go silly over; but their 'earts, Flanso–their 'earts is blacker than you, old man. Yet I don't know–p'r'aps–but what's the good o' spekylatin'? Things is a puzzle, and we ain't got the brains for to work it out.'

He shook his head, and fell into a reverie from which he was suddenly awakened by a distant rifle shot. Instantly he became the man of action again. He swung round, signed to the natives to halt, and put his fingers to his lips enjoining silence. Then he hastened down the line until he had discovered Lafoa.

'Here, you!' he said. 'You makee all fellas hold their jaw and come bunko arter me, see? Bad fellas fightee; we go see what's up. See?'

The interpreter nodded, and hurried to Flanso, who gave orders in his own tongue. It was clear that he looked to Grinson for leadership. More shots rang out ahead.

'That's a revolver,' murmured Grinson. 'Mr. Trentham! Spears. Bows and arrows.' He looked round at the natives. 'May be some good. Fust thing is to find out exactly what's what. Here, you, how far off–how muchee way–your village?'

The interpreter did not understand him. Grinson groaned.

'Well, makee all black fellas hidee in bushes, so no one can see. Savvy?'

This appeared clear, for the natives, at a word from Lafoa, scattered, and in

a few moments were invisible.

'Now come alonga me,' continued Grinson. 'Flanso too. Come on!'

Flanso leading, they wormed their way stealthily through the forest growth. The sounds of conflict grew as they progressed. Presently they were conscious of the smell of burning, and thin trails of smoke were wafted among the trees. Coming to the outskirts of the village, they beheld several huts blazing. At first they saw no human being, but advancing cautiously through the thick bushes that spread behind the huts, they came upon a Papuan squatting on the ground and rocking himself with pain. A question from Flanso elicited an account of what had happened. An hour or two before, the outlying scouts had discovered a number of white men marching towards the village. They had hastened back with the news, and the white men in the village had ordered all the people to withdraw into the inner enclosure. The enemy had come upon them before they were all within the wall. Some of the people had been killed, some wounded, others had escaped into the forest. The huts had been fired, and the enemy had rushed towards the gate, but had hurriedly retreated before a shower of arrows and the fire-magic that met them. They had posted themselves among the trees, and a little while before had begun to shoot their hot stones over the wall.

Lafoa interpreted this as well as he could to Grinson, who, however, seemed to understand the position instinctively. He bade Lafoa hasten back to the men halting in the forest a quarter of a mile behind, and bring up all the young warriors. While the man was absent Grinson sat down at the foot of a tree, stretched out his legs, folded his arms, and pondered. There had not been time for the Raider to reach the cove and land her crew, therefore the attackers must be relatively few in number. They were armed with rifles; probably the rifles had bayonets; therefore, though few in number, they were much more than a match for a throng of untrained savages with no better weapons than bows and arrows and spears.

'Which I mean to say,' said Grinson to himself, 'that is if we don't come to close quarters, whereas and however 'tis numbers what tells in a rush, such as boarding a vessel when you 're close alongside and Admiral Nelson piped all hands to repel boarders–or t'other way about, for 'twas us what boarded the enemy, must 'a been, being British. That's one point settled, Flanso, old man; we 've got to board 'em, take 'em abaft, otherwise about the rump or stern, and lively too, not forgetting that Mr. Trentham is for'ard banging away with his revolver, and we stand a good chance of being bowled over in mistake, and apologies are no use, and it's our look-out, and no blame to anybody. Now I come to think of it, that point's fust and last, for if we rush 'em and don't win, why, then nothing matters no more, and we 're all booked for the pearly gates and no mistake.

Things are getting pretty hot by the sound of it, and I 'm afraid that there revolver have give out, and–ah! here come the boarding party.'

Lafoa stole through the brushwood followed by twenty or thirty young men of the higher caste, all moving as silently as wild animals.

'Tell 'em to lay snug–otherwise doggo–while you and me and the chief go for'ard and do a bit of spying,' said Grinson.

He crept forward with the two men, and came presently to a spot among the trees where it was possible to get a fairly clear view of the fighting. A number of Germans were laying piles of brushwood at the foot of the wall; others were breaking holes in it, or enlarging slight gaps between the logs; others were bringing up more brushwood from the forest, while reports and flashes high up in some trees overlooking one side of the enclosure showed that snipers had been posted to pick off the garrison. For the moment none of the defenders were visible. Grinson guessed that Trentham, having exhausted or all but exhausted his ammunition, was reserving himself for the inrush which without firearms it was impossible to prevent.

'There 's Trousers!' thought Grinson, catching sight of Hahn, who appeared to be superintending operations. 'If I don't give him a dusting—-'

He stole back to the waiting natives, whispering instructions to Lafoa on the way. Half a dozen men were told off to creep through the bush and deal with the snipers in the trees, Grinson judging that in the dense undergrowth a native with a bow and a spear should be a match for a white man in a tree, even though armed with a rifle. The rest of the men were ordered to follow him noiselessly to the edge of the clearing in front of the wall, and to dash at the enemy when he gave the word. The slight sounds of their movements were smothered by the reports of the rifles and the hacking at the wall.

On reaching the spot, Grinson perceived that the Germans were massing for a determined push. At the sound of Hahn's whistle they sprang on to the piles of brushwood and attempted to swarm up and over the wall. Grinson could just see Trentham above the top, swinging a huge native club. While he was looking, the pendulum swing of the weapon disposed of two Germans who had come within its formidable sweep. To right and left, however, several of the enemy had got a footing on the wall, in spite of the spears hurled by the older and weaker natives who alone had remained in the village.

Then Grinson let out a bellow like the blast of a fog-horn, and sprang from the shelter of the trees with a spear in each hand, followed by the horde of natives, yelling and screeching. The Germans turned in alarm to discover what was threatening them, dropped to their knees, and raised their rifles. Only a few of them fired; the rest, disconcerted by the shower of arrows and spears which the natives let fly at them as they ran, dropped their rifles and fled helter-skelter

among the trees, Flanso leading his men in hot pursuit.

[image]

GRINSON LET OUT A BELLOW LIKE THE BLAST OF A FOG-HORN, AND SPRANG FROM THE TREES, FOLLOWED BY A HORDE OF NATIVES.

Grinson had made straight for Hahn, hurled one of his spears at him, which missed, and coming to close quarters, lunged at him with the other. But as he reached forward, a bullet from one of the snipers who had not yet been dislodged from his tree struck the boatswain on the arm. He spun round and fell on his face, just as Trentham, with Meek and a score of natives, came rushing out at the gate. Hahn had raised his revolver to shoot the fallen seaman, but catching sight of Trentham, he snapped an ill-aimed shot at him, then took to his heels and followed his men into the forest.

Trentham dispatched Lafoa to recall the natives, fearing that the Germans would rally and outmatch them in a running fight; then he returned to Grinson, who had sat up, and was trying to pull off his coat.

'Just a tickler, sir,' said the boatswain, grinning. 'I 'd a sort of feeling that I 'd be wounded in the house of my friends, as you may say, them being Bible words and all correct. Easy all! That's off. My goose is all right, praise be! Missed it by an inch, your lucky shot did, sir.'

'My shot? I didn't fire.'

'I 'm sure I beg your pardon, and won't say no more about it, though I 'd a notion you fired at Trousers and missed. This 'ere scratch won't spoil my beauty sleep, anyway. Mr. Hoole, sir? He got off like a bird, not but what they didn't have a go at him; the Raider, sir–most unfortunate, she come up just as we was getting ready for the kick-off, as you may say. The old wreck's blown to blazes, but no more harm done, and I lay Mr. Hoole by this time have got somewhere, though where that may be remains to be seen.'

'Thankful I am as you 're not killed, Mr. Grinson,' said Meek, who had come up from behind.

'Same to you, Ephraim, me lad. The only fly in my gizzard is that Trousers has got off; but we 'll dust him yet, Ephraim. No, I don't want no help; I 'm sound on my pins, and my arm don't hurt so bad as vaccination. What I *would* like is a pint o' beer, but I might as well cry for the moon. Things is a great puzzle,

Ephraim!'

CHAPTER XVIII
THE AVALANCHE

'What I'd like to know, sir,' said Grinson, as they re-entered the enclosure, 'what I 'd like to know is, why them Germans, Trousers and the rest, took it into their heads to try this little game when our backs was turned, meaning Mr. Hoole and me?'

'You think they wouldn't have tried it if they hadn't known you were away?' said Trentham, checking a smile.

'Well, sir, two 's two; you can't get over that. If the whole crew had come, 't 'ud 'a been different; but with the Raider away, Trousers hadn't got enough men for the job, unless he knew we were short-handed, and I don't see nohow he could have known that.'

'They must be desperately in want of coal, one would think. Or perhaps Hahn wanted to distinguish himself in the absence of his commander. It would have been a good stroke to recover the slaves, you know.'

'That's it, sir,' cried Grinson, slapping his thigh. 'Likewise and moreover he was riled with Ephraim what defied him, and so he folds his arms and scowls under his eyebrows and hisses through his clenched teeth, "I will have my revenge." I 've seed that on the stage many a time.'

'We 'll grant that Hahn is a villain; but I fancy they had a very practical object in making this raid. Perhaps they 've been unlucky on the sea lately, must have coal, and would rather get the natives to dig it than dig it themselves. In that case we may expect another attack. How far was the Raider away when you last saw her?'

'From fifteen to twenty sea-mile, sir. She 's back in harbour by this, I reckon.'

'Then I think we had better reconnoitre. I 'll have a word with Flanso; now that his ceremony is over, he 'll probably be able to attend to business. Be ready to come with me.'

The chief was at first disposed to regard the recent victory as decisive; but Trentham managed to convince him that a still more serious attack might have to be met, and induced him to take the needful measures of defence. It was arranged

that at the first sign of danger the whole population of the village should be withdrawn into the inner enclosure, where they would have the protection of the wall. The object of the defence must be to hold the wall until help came. There was a possibility, of course, that Hoole might not succeed in his mission. The engine might fail; even if he reached a port there might be no force available for hunting the Raider. Trentham was not blind to the difficulties of the position; but it was essential to keep up a show of confidence, and to take all possible steps to hold the ground.

Less than an hour after Flanso's return Trentham set off with Grinson and half a dozen natives, among whom was Lafoa, for the cove. They marched cautiously, in case any of Hahn's party were still lingering in the forest; but the Germans had evidently been daunted and had returned to their base.

Trentham had decided to make for the spot where he had organised Meek's release. While affording a good post of observation, it was difficult of access from the beach, and even if discovered by the enemy he would have plenty of time to escape into the forest behind. He gave a wide berth to the sentry-box above the cove, crept round through almost impenetrable thickets, and had nearly reached the slope strewn with boulders when there came faintly on his ear the characteristic rattle of a donkey-engine.

'The Raider 's back in the cove, Grinson,' he said.

'Ay, ay, sir, and hoisting coal, seemingly.'

Bidding Grinson keep the natives under cover near the head of the slope, Trentham stole forward, dodging among the boulders, until he reached a point where he could peep over at the cove beneath without much risk of being detected. The Raider was anchored almost in the same position as when he had last seen her; smoke was pouring from her funnel. There was much activity both on deck and on the shore. The donkey-engine was lifting, not coal, but stores from the ship's boats lying under her side. Men were carrying boxes and bales from the shed to the shore. Everybody was moving with an air of bustle and haste. It was impossible to doubt that the vessel was about to leave the cove: the settlement was to be abandoned.

An hour or two earlier Trentham would have rejoiced to know that the Raider was departing. But at this moment he felt only annoyance, disappointment, positive anger. Within a few short hours Hoole, unless baulked by ill-luck, would guide a British vessel to the cove, and the Raider would meet a well-deserved fate. It seemed that the Germans had taken alarm on seeing their sea-plane flying eastwards, obviously under other than German control. They had suspected the nature of its mission, and having a wholesome dread of what might befall them, had determined to forestall the inevitable. With all his heart Trentham wished that he could hold the vessel at her anchorage. But he could do

nothing to interfere with the bustling preparations below. The Raider was getting up steam; the stores were being methodically hoisted and stowed; before very long the vessel would disappear round the horn of the cove, and he could only watch her impotently.

'Flanso's people won't be bothered any more; that's one good thing,' he thought, as he began to climb up the slope. Picking his way, he stumbled, and clutched at one of the boulders to maintain his footing. The rock swayed slightly. Trentham stood still for a moment, resting his hand on it. An observer would have noticed that his brow suddenly cleared, his eyes danced, a flush spread over his cheeks. Then with quick movements, yet careful to keep under cover, he clambered up and rejoined Grinson. There was a brief, rapid conversation between them. Grinson's broad face expressed in turn surprise, doubt, determination, glee. Lafoa was given an order. Then, while Trentham directed them from the cover of the trees, the others quickly rolled a number of the largest boulders to a part of the slope which, as nearly as he could gauge the position, was directly above the Raider. It was no easy matter to move unseen from the sheds. Some of the most promising of the boulders had to be neglected. But the noise below was great enough to smother the sounds of the men's swift movements, and they were not interrupted. Presently, over a space of more than a hundred yards, there were ranged in three orderly rows, each row being about twenty paces from the next, a collection of rocks of all shapes and sizes and weights, from knobs of a few pounds to boulders so heavy as to need the united efforts of several men to move them. One of these, indeed, almost escaped from the grasp of the three men handling it, and Trentham felt a cold thrill at the imminence of a premature descent. But Grinson's brawny arms arrested the monster in the nick of time, and he secured it temporarily by means of smaller rocks wedged between it and the earth. Blowing hard, he came to Trentham's side.

'"Shust in time!" as old Trousers would say, sir,' he remarked. 'All's ready, but I won't answer for what 'll happen when you say "go."'

'We must do our best and trust to luck.'

'That's not my meaning, sir. It's these 'ere ugly mugs. They 've had no drill, d' ye see. Might as well be horse marines, in a manner of speaking.'

'Not so bad as that, Grinson. They have done very well, so far. Lafoa seems to understand what is needed, and if you set them a good example, I dare say they 'll follow it. The Germans seem to have cleared up nearly everything, and we had better start operations. I 'll climb down to the left yonder, where I 'll be out of the way, but can observe results without being seen myself. I 'll give the signal by lifting my hand; the rest is with you and the natives.'

'Ay, ay, sir. It 'll be a bit of a "tamasha," as they say out east.'

Trentham clambered down the slope under cover of the boulders, until he

gained the spot he had pointed out. Grinson and the natives posted themselves at equal intervals behind the first row of the displaced boulders. A boat filled with boxes of ammunition was putting off from the shore. All of the crew who were not already on board the vessel were moving down from the sheds; apparently their work was finished. Trentham gazed seawards; there was no sign of the seaplane or of any ship. He raised his hand. Grinson instantly gave a mighty shove to the huge boulder behind which he was standing, and it began to bump down the slope. The natives were not quite so prompt, but after only a few seconds' delay five other boulders of smaller bulk started forward. Four reached the brink almost together, the fifth rolled a few yards, then stopped. But a few moments later there were five resounding splashes in quick succession as the rocks plunged into the sea.

[image]

GRINSON GAVE THE BOULDER A SHOVE IN THE DESIRED DIRECTION.

Eagerly watching the result of his scheme, Trentham was disappointed to see that the missiles had fallen short of the Raider. But all work on the vessel ceased; a bale of goods that was being hoisted by the donkey-engine stopped halfway; the men on board gazed in surprise up the cliff, those in the boat stopped pulling. The angle of the slope was such that the men above were invisible; there was nothing to show that the fall of the boulders was not accidental.

Meanwhile, however, Grinson and his party had run up to the second row, and while the Germans were discussing the phenomenon another shower tumbled over the edge, one of the boulders falling plump on the bridge of the vessel, knocking away a portion of the rail, missing the captain by a foot or two, and crashing through the window of his cabin. Two went clean over the ship; the other two fell a little short of the port side, and threw a great volume of water into the half-empty boat. After a brief interval another set of boulders followed, and then another, until the missiles fell in a continuous shower. The captain roared an order; the grinding of the anchor chain was heard, and the men on shore, carrying rifles, rushed up the beach towards the winding path that led up the cliffs.

Trentham began to feel anxious. Very little damage had yet been done; the boulders varied greatly in shape and weight, and their trajectory after leaving the edge was equally various. Some rolled sideways; one, indeed, took an extraordinary tortuous course to the right, and struck the roof of the nearest hut, which

was shivered into fragments. Those that had fallen nearest to the vessel were the larger rocks from the second row, and Trentham signalled to Grinson to deal with those remaining. He felt that the sands were running out; but there were still a few minutes before the Germans rushing up the steep and roundabout path could reach the head of the slope.

'A little more to the left!' he shouted to Grinson, realising that nothing was now to be gained by silence.

'Ay, ay, sir!' roared the seaman, shoving a knobby rock in the desired direction.

Trentham held his breath as he watched its flight. Before he was prepared for it there was a thunderous crash; the boulder had struck the side of the vessel a few feet below the rail, within twenty feet of the bows, passing clean through the plates, and leaving a huge rent. Almost immediately afterwards another boulder crashed through the deck slightly abaft the funnel. There was an instant rush of steam; apparently it had smashed through one of the boilers.

[image]

WITH A THUNDEROUS CRASH IT STRUCK THE SIDE OF THE VESSEL A FEW FEET BELOW THE RAIL.

Among the crew surprise had become consternation, and now developed into panic. Men rushed from below and sprang overboard. Others were running wildly about the deck. The captain had gone forward with one of his officers to see the extent of the damage there. Water was pouring through the side. Trentham, judging that the vessel was at any rate disabled, and that it was time to be gone, turned to climb up the slope, and wriggled hastily aside to avoid a boulder which had swerved in its course and was hurtling in his direction. He stopped to throw a last glimpse below; the boulder which he had so narrowly escaped carried away the donkey-engine, and ricochetted from the deck into the sea.

'Well done!' he cried, and ran to assist Grinson to topple over one of the large rocks which had supported the rope on the night of Meek's release.

'That's riddled 'em!' shouted Grinson, as the noise of shattered metal rose from below.

'She can't get away!' panted Trentham. 'They 're coming up the cliff; we must run for it.'

Collecting the men, he dashed up the few remaining yards of the slope and headed them into the forest just as a German seaman came in sight near the end of the ledge.

'"Shust in time!" Trousers, my son,' chuckled Grinson. 'We give her a good battering, sir?'

'Cut open her side, broke a boiler, and drowned the donkey-engine. What more I don't know; but she 's crippled.'

'My cripes! What a tale to tell my Ephraim! I only wish the lad could 'a seen it hisself.'

CHAPTER XIX
AT ARM'S LENGTH

Within the mazes of the forest the little party had no fear of pursuit, and they marched rapidly homeward with the alacrity of men conscious of success. They had gone only a few miles when Trentham heard the unmistakable purring of the seaplane's engine. At that spot the trees formed a canopy overhead through which the sky could scarcely be seen; but at his bidding Lafoa ordered one of the natives to climb a lofty trunk and discover if possible in what direction the machine was flying. The sound had long been inaudible when the man came to the ground again and reported that the strange bird had not soared within sight.

They pushed oh, and were met some little distance from the village by Hoole himself.

'Been scalp-hunting?' he said with a smile.

'No; playing bowls. But what's your news?' asked Trentham. 'Ours will keep.'

'Well, I guess it might be worse. I made Wilhelmshafen, and had to run the gauntlet of a score or so of rifles. It seems they 'd heard a thing or two about the seaplane, and had already reported to one of your warships that's cruising somewhere east. I didn't dare land till I 'd dropped a note telling 'em who I was. There's no warship within miles; but as soon as they had heard my story they rose to the occasion; they 're some sports. The only vessel they had around was a tramp; she might make ten knots in the ordinary way, but could be speeded up to twelve, perhaps, by frantic stoking; so the engineer said. The skipper started coaling at once; he had her cleared of everything that could be spared, and the crew volunteered to a man.'

'But, my dear fellow, a tramp! She 'd no more offensive weapon, I suppose, than a hose.'

'That's correct; but, of course, the skipper had no notion of fighting the Raider. His idea was to steal up along the coast and lie doggo while his men came across country and got you away. At the same time he did what was possible by way of armament. There was a number of machine-guns on shore, left by the Germans when they hauled down their flag to the Australians. He put them aboard, and some Australian gunners were keen to join in this stunt, along with a crowd of young fellows who swore they were all crack shots, and a trader or two. Altogether there are between thirty and forty men coming along. She wasn't ready, of course, when I left; but with good luck she 'll lie off the shore eastward by sunrise to-morrow. Stealing up through the night she 's a good chance of escaping notice, and unless the Raider makes an early morning trip you 'll get away without trouble. Of course, if she is spotted–well, we know what the Raider's guns can do.'

'The tramp has only to keep out of range; the Raider 's crippled.'

'You don't say! Did she run aground?'

Trentham related the morning's events.

'Bully!' cried Hoole. 'Say, what's to prevent our making a good bag of Germans? You think the Raider will sink?'

'There can't be much question of that. They had carried most of their arms on board, and probably those went down with the vessel; the men would waste their time trying to save her. But there were some armed men still on shore, and they might rescue a certain number of rifles before the ship went down. As I came along I tried to decide what I 'd do myself in the Germans' place. They are marooned; they must guess that you flew off for help, and expect to have to deal with some sort of force. The question is, will they surrender or fight?'

'Well, I don't know the inside of a German's mind, so I can't say; but I know what I 'd do. I wouldn't surrender without a fight; and if I saw the odds against me, I 'd make tracks inland, live on the country, and hold out. The Germans are so cocksure of winning the war that I guess they 'll do that.'

'I came to the same conclusion. It's not as if they were traders; they 're naval men, and I can't imagine their giving in tamely. Well, then, we shall have to prepare for a fight.'

'How do you mean?

'They 've lost the greater part of their provisions, and will have to replace them. What better chance than to quarter themselves by main force on the nearest village, which is our friend Flanso's, and compel the people to provide for them? Incidentally also take vengeance for the smashing of their vessel. We can't leave Flanso in the lurch.'

'I guess you 're right. Some of those young fellows at Wilhelmshafen were spoiling for a fight, and were real disgruntled when the skipper showed 'em they

'd have no chance against a well-armed raider. They 'll be ready enough to take a hand in beating off the Germans if they attack the village.'

'If they arrive in time. We may have to face the music before they get here, and I don't much like the prospect. Thanks to Grinson, we did very well against Hahn's handful this morning, but it will be quite another thing to deal with fifty or sixty, perhaps more, a good proportion armed with rifles. Your revolver ammunition is all spent; we 've got the revolvers of the two prisoners, that's all.'

'I brought three revolvers along and a few rounds of cartridges; very little good they 'll be against two or three score rifles. We 'll be back of the wall, of course, which is something to the good.'

'By the way, we heard your seaplane. Where is it?'

'Away yonder. I came down on that pond the Germans failed to strike. I guess they heard her too, and may waste time trying to find her, which will give us a chance to set our defences in order. Say, shall we get along?'

They hurried on. The natives of their party had preceded them, and were surrounded by groups of excited villagers to whom they were expounding the method by which the white men had destroyed the enemy's vessel. A noisy throng followed Trentham and his friends to the gate of the inner enclosure, and when they had disappeared, started a victory dance up and down the broad path.

Lafoa's aid was once more enlisted by Trentham in explaining the situation to the chief. More intelligent than his subjects outside, Flanso was under no illusion about the danger that threatened his village. His own experiences while in the hands of the Germans left him in no doubt as to the fate in store for his people if the enemy got the better of them, and he was ready to accept Trentham's suggestion that all but the fighting men should be at once sent away southward into the forest, where they would be at least out of harm's way until the issue was determined. But when he consulted some of his counsellors he at once encountered the strenuous opposition of the medicine-man, who had not forgiven Hoole for having made him cut so sorry a figure at the duk-duk dance. He protested that the new danger threatening the village was due to the stupidity of the white men. Why had they destroyed the blue vessel, and prevented the enemy from going away? They were already responsible for the destruction of the wreck that had been preserved and cherished by the chief's forefathers from the beginning of the world. They had prevented the human sacrifice customary at the inauguration of a new chief. They were meddlers, and all the misfortunes that had befallen the village were due to them.

Such was the gist of the medicine-man's harangue, though these few sentences by no means represent the torrent of words which poured from his lips. Nor could any one but a cinematograph operator properly depict the extraordinary grimaces of his features and the violent gestures with which he emphasised

his denunciations. His right hand wielded a heavy nail-studded mace, and as his excitement grew he stepped, or rather danced, nearer to the group of white men, twirling the mace, tossing it in the air, striking the ground with it. Ignorant though they were of his language, the white men could not mistake the purport of his speech, and two of them noticed with some anxiety that he was making an impression on some members of his native audience. Grinson, however, felt nothing but amusement. A broad grin spread over his face as he listened and watched, and the more excited the medicine-man became the more pleasure the seaman took in the performance, giving utterance now and then to his sentiments with sundry ejaculations and cat-calls.

At last a sudden change came over his expression. The medicine-man in his frenzy had drawn very near to Hoole, and to give point to one of his statements he thrust his mace forward at the full length of his arm, so that Hoole only escaped a blow by stepping quickly back. It was uncertain whether the man had intended to attack him, but the suspicion was too much for Grinson. His lips snapped together; with a great roar he hurled himself at the orator, struck the mace from his hand, and caught him round the waist and hoisted him above his head. The sinews of the seaman's arms cracked; for some seconds he held the native aloft, as if hesitating whether to cast him to the ground. Terrified into silence, the man wriggled; the spectators looked on open-mouthed. Grinson grew purple with exertion; then he laughed. Gradually he lowered his arms, stretched to full length, and gently laid the man at Hoole's feet.

'Windbag!' he muttered, passing his hand across his sweating brow, then setting his arms akimbo and looking down at the still figure.

Gasps of amazement broke from the natives. The medicine-man lay for half a minute; when Grinson stooped and picked up the fallen mace he closed his eyes as if expecting a blow.

'A very neat little bobby's bludgeon, sir,' said Grinson, sticking the mace under his arm. 'Move on, there!'

The medicine-man opened his eyes, and seeing that Grinson had turned aside he crawled slowly away, rose to his feet, and sidled into his hut.

The colloquy he had interrupted was resumed. So great was the impression made by Grinson's display of strength that the natives were ready to agree to anything the white men proposed. It was arranged that the non-combatants should be sent away; a number of huts and trees near the wall on the outside should be razed, provisions brought into the inner enclosure. A few weak spots in the wall were strengthened, and by nightfall everything that was possible had been done to prepare for attack. Scouts meanwhile had been sent out in the direction from which attack might be expected. These were withdrawn as soon as it became dark, and the whole able-bodied population was brought within the

wall.

Trentham recognised the futility of attempting any definite tactical measures with a rabble of undisciplined natives.

'They must fight in their own way, if there is to be a fight,' he said to Hoole. 'Let alone the impossibility of giving orders with only one interpreter, we should only worry them by trying to lick them into shape. We must rely on their common sense.'

'Just so. It's up to them to keep the enemy out, and that's all that matters. A word as to not exposing themselves–that's all we can do, except set 'em a good example.'

'As to that, you 'd be useful here, old man; but I fancy you 'd be even more useful if you went off in the seaplane and guided the steamer into the cove. With the Raider sunk, she could quite well run in and land her crew on the Germans' beach; they 'd get here quicker then than if they landed at a spot we don't know the way from.'

'Well, I guess we 'll wait and see,' said Hoole. 'We 'll take turns to do sentry-go through the night. If nothing happens, I 'll very likely take a run out in the morning. The tramp won't be far away then, anyhow.'

CHAPTER XX
THE LAST RAID

'Ephraim, have you made your will, me lad?' asked Grinson, sitting in the hut with Meek in the early hours of the morning.

'Never did I think of such a thing, Mr. Grinson,' replied Meek. '"Tis only lords and skippers as make wills.'

'That 's where you 're wrong, me lad. Specially now. For why? 'Cos 'tis the dooty of every man to make his will afore going into action.'

'S'pose he ain't got nothing to leave, and no widders nor orphans to purvide for?'

'It don't make no difference. Besides, every man's got something. Lord Admiral Nelson, as you 've heard of, had a glass eye, and 'tis said he left it to his footman, as he once caught nicking, to remind him that there 's always an Eye beholding of the evil and the good, besides his heart to the country.'

'Well, I never!'

'Not but what there 's a mighty big risk in making your will. There was once a chap I knowed as made his will and died next day–fell off a ladder, he did, and his mates said he might 'a been alive to this day only for the will. Likewise a skipper I once sailed with left his craft to be sold and divided among the crew; uncommon skipper he was; and she went down next voyage, and not insured. Ah! 'tis a solemn thought, making your will.'

'What put making wills and such into your head just now, Mr. Grinson?'

'Well, it's like this. The gentlemen expects what you may call a battle royal afore the day 's out, and you 've got to look at it sensible. We come all right out o' that scrap yesterday, but 'twas only Trousers and a few more, and we took 'em by surprise, d' ye see? Things will be different if all them Germans come up together; the odds ain't even, Ephraim.'

'True. I can bear ye out in that, Mr. Grinson. I don't hold with fighting–not with guns.'

'No more do I, 'cos I never shot a gun in my life. But this 'ere truncheon of old ugly mug's is as good as a gun, if it gets a chance; which I mean to say firing off guns ain't fighting at all, to my way of thinking. Darbies or sticks–that 's all right; the best man wins; but with guns–why, any little mean feller as would give you best if you looked at him may do you in from a distance, hiding behind a haystack, p'r'aps, or up a tree. No, Ephraim, that ain't fighting, not by a long chalk.'

'And have you made your own will, Mr. Grinson?'

'No, I ain't, and I 'm sorry for you, me lad, for I meant to leave you my old parrot as sits on his perch in Mother Perkins's parlour. You remember Mother Perkins, what said she 'd be glad to mind the bird, 'cos his language was so beautiful and reminded her of me?'

'Ah! I wish I could speak like you, Mr. Grinson, but there–I never could do it, not if I tried ever so. But you don't think you 're going to be killed?'

'Well, you see, I 'm twice as broad as you, and so the chances is against me, with guns. It's only fair, after all, 'cos in a real fight I could take on two, p'r'aps more; I should say more, with this 'ere truncheon. I ain't got no presentiments, Ephraim; but what is to be is, and in case they knock a hole in me I do hereby declare and pronounce as my old parrot is to belong to you and no one else, and so you 'll tell Mother Perkins.'

'I don't like to think of it, Mr. Grinson, but if so be as you 're killed and I ain't, I 'll look after that bird as if 'twas you, and think of you whenever it speaks.'

'Only if it speaks decent, Ephraim. I won't deny it picked up a few unholy words afore I bought it, and they come out sometimes; you can't help it.'

The seamen, though they had recently returned from sentry-go, were wakeful, and talked on till morning, exchanging reminiscences of their years

of comradeship. At sunrise they joined Trentham and Hoole, and were allotted posts within the walls, if the Germans should attack. Scouts had already been sent out into the forest, to keep watch in the direction from which the enemy was likely to come.

During the night the position had been thoroughly discussed between Trentham and Hoole. The latter, though reluctant to leave his friend to bear the brunt of any fighting that might take place, at last agreed that probably the best service that he could render was to hasten the arrival of the steamer. About nine o'clock he set off with two natives for the lake where he had left the seaplane. Little more than two hours later Trentham heard the hum of the engine. The seaplane passed over the village, going eastward and skimming the tree-tops. From the signs made by Hoole, Trentham understood that the Germans were on their way, and this preliminary intimation was confirmed soon after noon, when the scouts came running in. Their report that a great host of the bad men was approaching aroused great excitement among the natives, who, proud of their easy victory on the previous day, showed little sign of understanding the nature of the ordeal they were to pass through. Some of them were for sallying out and meeting the Germans in the forest; but Flanso had intelligence enough to perceive the danger of breaking up his force, and at Trentham's suggestion he concentrated the greater number of his men near the gate, where the enemy's main attack was likely to be made. A few were stationed at other points along the circuit of the wall, to give notice if surprise attacks were attempted elsewhere than in front.

Trentham had persuaded the chief to place under Grinson's command about a score of the men whom he had led on the day before. His leadership then, and his subsequent display of muscular strength in dealing with the medicine-man, had won their admiration; and the fact that he bore their totem mark on his shoulder was a great factor in inspiring them with confidence. Even without Lafoa's assistance Grinson seemed to be able to make them understand his wishes.

'You had better hold your men in reserve, Grinson,' said Trentham. 'Put them in a central position–about the chief's house, say; and keep them out of the fight until they can come in with decisive effect.'

'For the knock-out, as you may say, sir,' Grinson replied. 'I understand. But begging your pardon, I ain't to remain in a state of absolution if I see a chance–you don't mean that, sir?'

'Not at all,' answered Trentham, who was by this time able to understand the seaman's sometimes recondite phraseology. 'All I mean is that I don't want you to take part in every scrimmage, but only when you see the rest of us hard pressed. Where 's your revolver, by the way?'

'I give it to Ephraim, sir.'

'But he had one; we have five altogether now.'

'True, sir; but the long and short is that I feel much more at home with this 'ere truncheon or knuckle-duster. With the pistol I might miss, not being used to such things; but with this'–he lifted it, eyeing it with affection–'with this I can be sure, by the feel.'

'Is Meek a good shot?'

'He couldn't hit a hay-stack, sir; but, talking between our two selves, we thought Ephraim was the man to keep his eye on you and be ready to give you another pistol when the fust is empty. I don't mind saying 'twas my idea, 'cos Ephraim ain't quite hisself yet arter that night on the ledge, only he 's got such a spirit that nothing would 'a kept him out of it if so be he didn't believe he was more useful otherways, and he believes that now, though I won't answer for how long it will last.'

The simple dispositions that were alone possible had barely been made when Trentham, looking out over the wall beside the gate, saw a man bearing a white flag advancing unaccompanied along the broad central path through the village. In a few seconds he recognised the square, solid face of Hahn. The German, who appeared to be unarmed, halted beyond range of revolver shots, and waving his flag, shouted:

'Hi, hi! Somevon speak.'

'What do you want, Hahn?' Trentham called.

'I speak for Captain Holzbach, of ze Imperial German Navy,' said Hahn. 'Ze captain bresent his gompliments and say zat he admire very much ze clever vay his ship is sunk, and zink ze vite men shall now be friendly, because we must all remain on zis island until ze var end. He vish to buy food, and say if ze savages come out and sell, he pay good price, and zey shall be safe.'

Trentham was under no illusion as to the German's good will; but wishing to temporise, partly with a view to the avoidance of further fighting, partly to allow for the arrival of the expected help, he replied:

'On behalf of the chief of this village I am willing to strike a bargain. If you, Hahn, and three other officers will come inside, unarmed, as hostages, a sufficient supply of provisions shall be sent out to you, on condition that you leave this part of the country, and engage not to molest the people.'

Whatever Hahn may have expected, it was clear that he was surprised at the terms offered. After a slight hesitation he said:

'It is not right zat German officers shall place zemselves in ze hands of savages, vat eat men.'

'But I am not a savage, and I guarantee that you shall not be eaten. You have good reason for being sure of that, Hahn.'

The German appeared to be annoyed at the allusion to his rescue from the

dancing party on the beach.

'It is absurd!' he cried. 'Ze dignity of German officers vill not permit zem to do vat you say.'

'Then I am afraid that you must repeat to your captain that we cannot trade with him.'

'You know vat you do? Of us zere are fifty or sixty, viz rifles. You zink savages viz spears any good? Ve are not hard; but if it is var, zen—-'

'Threats are useless, Hahn,' Trentham interrupted. 'We know your idea of war. I have nothing more to say. You have my terms: you had better consult your superior officer.'

The German glared, turned on his heel, and walked away. The breathless silence which had held the natives during the colloquy was broken by shouts of triumph; but Trentham sent Lafoa to explain matters to the chief, and asked him to keep his men in readiness for the assault which could not long be delayed. It was clear to him that Hahn's mission had been intended to lead to the opening of the gate and the division of the garrison. He had no doubt that if the natives had been decoyed outside their wall, the Germans would have rushed the place.

For some time after Hahn's departure there was no sign of hostilities. Then the Germans could be heard shouting to one another in the forest north of the village, and with the voices mingled the sound of wood-cutting. None of the enemy came in sight, and Trentham could only conjecture the nature of their operations.

Nearly two hours passed. The natives grew more and more noisy and restless. They could not understand why they were still cooped up in the enclosure. At length, however, after a brief cessation of all sounds in the forest, there was a sudden whistle, followed by the sharp crack of rifles, and from the trees facing the northern side of the village the Germans rushed forward in open order, on a front of nearly a quarter of a mile. The defenders, as Trentham had ordered, remained out of sight. He himself watched the enemy through a loophole in the log wall.

They were variously armed. Some had rifles with bayonets; others cutlasses, others axes. Some carried roughly constructed ladders. As they drew nearer, Trentham noticed that these last, as well as the officers at different parts of the line, were armed with rifles. They came on steadily and silently until they were almost within effective bow-shot; then they halted, the officers collected and consulted together. It appeared that they were somewhat at a loss how to proceed against an enemy whom they could not see, and whose defences they had no means of battering down. The pause was of short duration. Another volley was fired, with the intention doubtless of overawing the natives rather than of doing effective damage. A few men behind the walls were slightly injured by

splinters; none were incapacitated, and all, with a self-restraint that Trentham had not expected, remained quietly at their posts until the enemy should come to close quarters.

After discharging their rifles, the Germans surged forward again, moving very rapidly, but maintaining a regular line. Trentham wondered why they were spread out so widely instead of concentrating on a limited section of the wall. In a few moments he saw through their plan. It had been desired to weaken the defence by compelling the natives to man a longer stretch of the wall than was the actual object of attack. The Germans suddenly contracted their front, no doubt calculating to reach the wall a few invaluable seconds before the defenders could mass at the threatened section.

They were now within range of the natives' weapons, and in close order presented a target which even Grinson, despite his want of skill with the spear, could hardly have missed. Obeying a preconcerted signal from Trentham, Flanso at last gave his panting warriors the word they had eagerly awaited. They sprang on to the platform that lined the foot of the wall, and was just high enough to bring their heads a few inches above the top. A shower of arrows and spears burst upon the advancing enemy. Many of them fell, but the rush was not stayed. There was no answer from their rifles; their orders evidently were to force their way into the defences with cold steel. Another flight of arrows equally failed to check them. With disciplined energy they swept forward to the wall, and having reached it were in comparative safety from the weapons of the men within. Quickly they set their ladders against the barricade and began to swarm up with the agility of seamen. Where there were no ladders they mounted on one another's backs. They gained the top, and then began a furious struggle, so confused that Trentham was never able to give a clear account of it.

[image]

QUICKLY THEY SET THEIR LADDERS AGAINST THE BARRICADE, AND BEGAN TO SWARM UP.

The Germans had the advantage of discipline, the higher position, and better weapons. The natives on the other hand, were more numerous, but lacked cohesion. They plied their spears manfully, but these were a poor defence against clubbed rifles, bayonets, swords, revolvers. Only their numbers saved them from utter defeat from the moment when the enemy gained a footing on the wall. Trentham ran along the line, making play with his revolver wherever the Germans were thickest. A group of natives had attached themselves to him, and

when he had disposed of two or three of the enemy with rapid shots, the Papuans took advantage of the Germans' momentary bafflement and with their spears cleared a few feet of the wall.

But he could not be everywhere at once. While he had been engaged at this spot, some fifty yards beyond, the Germans, having beaten off the natives who had tried to thrust them from the wall, had jumped down, and were pressing forward over the bodies of the fallen towards the centre of the enclosure. Trentham and Flanso had marked the danger at the same moment. With a resonant shout the latter dashed towards the enemy at the head of a body of picked men, and the Germans, outnumbered and unable to withstand the fury of his onset, fell stubbornly back. Satisfied that Flanso could hold his own for a time, Trentham dashed on to another point where half a dozen Germans in line were driving back with their bayonets the few survivors of the natives who had been unable to hold the wall. At this moment he was somewhat perturbed at hearing shouts and firing from a distant quarter which he had not known to be attacked. He had no time to find out what was happening there, but hoped that Grinson had been on the alert. On the point of plunging into the fray, he found that he had emptied both the revolvers he had brought with him. He snatched up a spear, but as he rose from stooping Meek's tremulous voice sounded in his ear.

'Mr. Grinson said I was to bring 'em, sir.'

The man thrust two revolvers into his hands, then took the spear and followed him.

The natives were falling back before the serried bayonets. From the wall behind Germans were leaping one after another as fast as they could climb the ladders on the other side. One of them, pausing on the top, fired his rifle point-blank at Trentham, but a comrade climbing after him jostled him at the critical moment; the shot flew wide, and, unknown to Trentham, struck Meek, who fell heavily near the foot of the wall. With a couple of shots Trentham disposed of the man who had fired at him and another who had just descended; then he turned to help the natives whom the pitiless bayonets were demoralising.

At this moment Hahn, with bayonet outstretched, came heavily towards him from the side. Trentham flashed a shot at him, and as he stumbled past, hard hit, wrenched the rifle from his grasp and hurried on. Coming upon the Germans from the rear, he shot down one after another; the natives, cheered by his presence, rallied, and flinging themselves on the survivors, disposed of them with their spears and sent reeling back others who had just sprung from the wall.

But other Germans were swarming over on each side. At three or four points little groups had found their footing and were more than holding their own, while others, astride on the top, were firing on the defenders and strewing the ground with their victims. Trentham saw with sinking heart that the natives

were everywhere giving way and falling back towards the chief's house. The Germans on the flank farthest from him were beginning to form up in line, with the evident intention of carrying all before them in a final charge. Fully occupied in helping his immediate followers to repel a swarm of Germans who were pouring over the wall in his neighbourhood, Trentham saw the imminence of total defeat which he now felt powerless to avert.

Facing the wall, he suddenly heard, above the general din of the conflict, the deep bellow of Grinson's war-cry. He turned quickly and saw the seaman, with his sleeves turned up, wielding his huge mace, and followed by a score of yelling natives, charging along at the foot of the wall. Swinging his mighty weapon as easily as if it had been a walking-cane, Grinson fell upon the flank of the Germans who were preparing to charge. Now he plied the mace in wide sweeps that cleared a path as a sickle through grain; now he gave point with the massive studded head; now he swung it over his head like a blacksmith's hammer. Revolvers were flashed at him, but he hurled himself along unscathed. The Germans on the wall dared not fire at him for fear of hitting their own men. And Trentham was amazed to see, close behind him, the hideous figure of the medicine-man, advancing with grotesque leaps and whirling his arms with extraordinary contortions.

The enemy huddled together, some still fighting, others merely seeking to escape from this human battering-ram. They began to retire in Trentham's direction; the natives in their front, taking heart, closed in; and Trentham, feeling that at this critical moment he might leave the wall unguarded, led his men to meet the discomfited enemy. Taken thus in front and on both flanks, so crowded together that those of them who had firearms were unable to use them, the Germans became a disorganised mob. Heedless of the shouts of their officers, of whom one or two had entered the enclosure, while the others were either on the wall or outside, they sought safety in flight. Many of them were cut down before they gained the wall. The rest clambered over, abandoning their weapons that impeded them, and fled helter-skelter into the forest, pursued by the natives led by Flanso himself.

Grinson sat down with his mace across his knees, wiped his streaming brow, and looked with a sort of amused curiosity at sundry gashes and stabs on his arm.

'Might 'a been worse, sir,' he said. 'Would you believe it? Ugly mug has stuck to me like a brother. Which it proves, if you want a man to love you, just

knock him down. But where's my Ephraim, sir? What's become o' the lad?'

CHAPTER XXI
JUSTICE

Some twenty minutes after the flight of the Germans two figures appeared at the farther end of the village, and walked quickly up the central path. Trentham, sitting just outside the gate, waved his hand and started to meet them. Hoole flourished his hat in reply, and turned to speak to the man accompanying him.

'Let me name to you Captain Rolfe, of the *Wanda*, old man,' said Hoole, when Trentham joined them.

'Pleased to meet you, sir,' said the seaman, clasping Trentham's hand in a crushing grip. 'We 're in at the death, and that's about all we can say for ourselves. You carry off the honours, sir.'

'Thanks, captain,' said Trentham. 'It was my friend Josiah Grinson who dealt the finishing stroke; I 'll introduce him to you presently.'

'The boatswain bold, as they say in the song,' added Hoole.

'Mr. Hoole has told me about him,' said the captain, 'and I 'll be glad to give him a berth.'

'You must take Meek too,' said Trentham with a smile. 'They 've been together twenty-five years or so, and I 'm sure nothing will part them now. At the present moment Grinson is acting as nurse. Meek was unlucky enough to get hit; not seriously, I 'm glad to say; but he wasn't in very good condition, and appears to have fainted from loss of blood. Grinson found him on the field, and after an explosive moment he carried him off to our hut. Grinson is a big burly fellow, with a heart as tender as a woman's.'

'A mixture you 'll often find among sailormen, if I may say so,' said the captain. 'But Grinson mustn't have all the credit, you know, Mr. Trentham. That dodge of yours with the Raider—-'

'Is she sunk?' asked Trentham.

'Sunk by the stern; all below water except a bit of her fore deck and her funnel. But she can be salved, and there 'll be something to share out, or I 'm a Dutchman.'

'You came into the cove?'

'I did, sir, and anchored within half a cable's length of the Raider. A couple

of Germans on shore flung up their hands at once, and we marched up under Mr. Hoole's lead without delay. You 're surprised to see no more of us, but the fact is, we met the Germans running for their lives. They were glad enough to surrender, for these savages don't know the meaning of mercy, and I 'm afraid they had already killed a number of them before we came on the scene. However, my ship's company–the queerest mixture I ever commanded–are marching the rest of them down to the cove, and as I 've plenty of cargo space on board, I gave 'em orders to drop them into the hold; by this time to-morrow we 'll hand 'em over in proper form as prisoners of war. I take it you 're ready to come with us?'

'Quite, I can assure you. But I think we ought to bury the German dead first. These people are cannibals.'

'Burying 's no good; they 'd dig 'em up as soon as our backs were turned. We can't give them seamen's burial, the sea being so far away. The only thing left is to burn them; certainly we couldn't leave them for a cannibal feast. And we had better set about it while most of the savages are away; there 'll be less trouble. Oh! here we are. A most uncommon native village. A few photographers will take a trip out here when your story is known. That's Grinson, I suppose. Who 's the fellow with him?'

Grinson was walking towards the hut, accompanied by the medicine-man carrying water in a huge banana stalk. Trentham laughed.

'That's the village doctor,' he said. 'A thorn in our flesh until Grinson tamed him by a sort of strong man exhibition. Now he 'll follow Grinson like a dog.'

'Natural philosophy,' said Hoole. 'The Germans will be the better for a dose of the same physic. It's a low order of intelligence that admits no superiority but brute force, and I guess you must deal with people as you find 'em. Ahoy, Grinson! How 's Meek?'

'Doing well, sir,' roared Grinson. He came towards the three men, the medicine-man trotting behind, and said in a confidential whisper, 'You must humour poor Ephraim a bit, gentlemen. He 's got it fair fixed in his mind as there 's no justice in this world, and nothing 'll shake him.'

'Why?' asked Trentham.

"Cos he was knocked out afore he began to fight. I never knowed Ephraim so obstropolous. He 'll hardly speak civil to me; says I kep' him out of it on purpose, a-holding revolvers as any funk could 'a done; and then, when he 'd picked up a spear in spite o' me, blest if he wasn't spun round directly afore he had a chanst. I told him wounds is honourable, and he rounded on me; "Honour be deed," says he, most unusual language for Ephraim; "they never give me a chanst; there's no justice in this world, not a morsel." Humour him, gents, if you 'll be so kind, and I dare say with time he 'll be the same lad again.'

Twelve hours later, under a brilliant moon, the little tramp *Wanda* puffed out of the cove on her voyage eastward. Trentham, the centre of an interested group, was relating in detail the story of the past weeks. Some distance away, sitting on the deck with his back against a coil of rope, Grinson, in tones much subdued, talked to Meek, slung in a hammock before him.

'Yes, Ephraim, Mr. Hoole came out in his true colours at last, just afore he flew away, which I mean to say he's true blue, and not a deceiving coat o' paint like that there Raider, though I own he did take us in, but no great sin. He 's a inventor, Ephraim; invented something as 'll make them airyplanes terrible engines o' mischief, and when I said as how there was enough mischief in the world—-'

'There 's no justice in it.'

'I was coming to that. When I said as how there was enough mischief in this wicked world, he laughed, he did, and said what he 'd invented would do for sewing machines when the war 's over. Now ain't there justice in that? Look at it straight, Ephraim, me lad. The Germans must be beat, or what's the good of anythink? Well, then, this notion o' Mr. Hoole's will help to beat 'em; Mr. Trentham says it's certain. Well, then, it's a good thing, and good things didn't oughter be wasted, so when the war 's over he just reverses the engine, as you may say, and then it's sewing machines what 'll make shirts and other peaceful things. Ain't there justice in that?'

'I never had a chanst.'

'No, and I feel for you; I wouldn't like it myself. But there 's more justice. By what Cap'n Rolfe says, they 're calling for hands for the Royal Navy, and I 'm going to sign on, and in course you 'll sign on too. Well, now, s'pose you 'd got your chanst, and been killed, like Trousers–'cos a savage speared him arter Mr. Trentham made him helpless–you might a' been killed; then you wouldn't have got my poll parrot, and you wouldn't 'a been alive to sign on with me, and no chanst then o' beating the Germans and making 'em sick o' themselves, and medals and all. Look at it straight, Ephraim, and you 'll see 'tis all justice, to say nothing of merciful Providence.'

'I don't rightly see as I can bear you out, Mr. Grinson,' said Meek sleepily.

'But you will, Ephraim, you will, me lad.... He 's going off, sir,' Grinson whispered as Trentham came up. 'Gripes! what a job I 've had! But he 'll be all right in the morning.'

Trentham won the Military Cross at the Battle of the Somme; Hoole was on the point of starting for Berlin when the armistice was broached; Grinson and Meek have hunted submarines in an armed trawler. Meek has been led to trace the hand of what he calls Justice from the moment when the Blue Raider sank the *Berenisa* to the moment when, following somewhat sheepishly his more self-

assured companion, he shambled through the courtyard of Buckingham Palace to receive his medal from the hand of the King.

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Barclay of the Guides

A Story of the Indian Mutiny. Illustrated in Colour by CYRUS CUNEO. With Maps.

Of all our Native Indian regiments the Guides have probably the most glorious traditions. They were among the few who remained true to their salt during the trying days of the great Mutiny, vying in gallantry and devotion with our best British regiments. The story tells how James Barclay, after a strange career in Afghanistan, becomes associated with this famous regiment, and though young in years, bears a man's part in the great march to Delhi, the capture of the royal city, and the suppression of the Mutiny.

With Drake on the Spanish Main

Illustrated in Colour by ARCHIBALD WEBB. With Maps.

A rousing story of adventure by sea and land. The hero, Dennis Hazelrig, is cast ashore on an island in the Spanish Main, the sole survivor of a band of adventurers from Plymouth. He lives for some time with no companion but a spider monkey, but by a series of remarkable incidents he gathers about him a numerous band of escaped slaves and prisoners, English, French and native; captures a Spanish fort; fights a Spanish galleon; meets Francis Drake, and accompanies him in his famous adventures on the Isthmus of Panama; and finally reaches England the possessor of much treasure. The author has, as usual, devoted much pains to characterisation, and every boy will delight in Amos Turnpenny, Tom Copstone, and other bold men of Devon, and in Mirandola, the monkey.

Palm Tree Island

Illustrated in Colour by ARCHIBALD WEBB.

In this story two boys are left on a volcanic island in the South Seas, destitute of everything but their clothes. The story relates how they provided themselves with food and shelter, with tools and weapons; how they fought with wild dogs and sea monsters; and how, when they have settled down to a comfortable life under the shadow of the volcano, their peace is disturbed by the advent of savages and a crew of mutinous Englishmen. The savages are driven away; the mutineers are subdued through the boys' ingenuity; and they ultimately sail away in a vessel of their own construction. In no other book has the author more admirably blended amusement with instruction. "Written so well that there Is not a dull page in the book."–*The World.*

Herbert Strang's Romances of Modern Invention

Bach of the following stories is concerned with some particular discovery of Modern Science, such as the aeroplane and the submarine, which it made use of in the working out of the plot; and the heroes of these adventures, who face dangers that were unknown in olden times, cannot fail to make a strong appeal to boys of to-day.

The Flying Boat

Illustrated in Colour.

The flying boat is a logical development of the hydroplane. At a sufficiently high speed, the hydroplane leaves the water and becomes a hydro-aeroplane. The possession of such a machine gives the hero of the story (the scene of which is laid in China) opportunities of highly exciting adventures, and incidentally the chance of rescuing an old chum who has fallen into the hands of Chinese revolutionaries.

"The book is alive with vigorous action from cover to cover. 'The Flying Boat' is a rattling good story."–*Bookman.*

The Motor Scout

A Story of Adventure in South America. Illustrated in Colour by CYRUS CUNEO.

In the interest aroused by the solution of the problem of flying, the mo-

tor bicycle has been entirely overlooked by story-writers. Happily Mr. Herbert Strang has now thought of making it the pivot of a story, the scene of which is one of the Latin States of South America. Mr. Strang tells the story of an Irish boy who is living in this State just at the time when one of the periodical revolutions breaks out. He is forced to take sides, and with the help of his motor-cycle is able to assist his friends, but not without running risks unknown to scouts provided with less novel means of traversing the country. "A really fine story, full of life, and one that any boy can enjoy."–*Outlook*.

Round the World in Seven Days

The Story of an Aeroplane. Illustrated in Colour by A. C. MICHAEL.

"This is a book which any boy would revel in, and which people who are no longer boys will read with equally breathless interest."–*Educational News*.

The Cruise of the Gyro-Car

Illustrated in Colour by A. C. MICHAEL.

(The Gyro-Car, which is a road vehicle or a boat at pleasure, is the logical outcome of the gyroscope applied to the bicycle.)

Swift and Sure

The Story of a Hydroplane. Illustrated in Colour by J. FINNEMORE.

"It is one of the most exciting of this season's works for boys, every page containing a thrill, and no boy will leave it to a second sitting if he can help it."–*Teacher*.

King of the Air

or, To Morocco on an Aeroplane. Illustrated in Colour by W. E. WEBSTER.

"One of the best boys' stories we have ever read."–*Morning Leader*.

"The best book of its kind now in existence."–*Manchester Guardian*.

Lord of the Seas

The Story of a Submarine. Illustrated in Colour by C. FLEMING WILLIAMS.

"The excitement lasts from cover to cover."–*Manchester Courier.*

BOOKS FOR BOYS
By CLAUDE GRAHAME-WHITE AND HARRY HARPER

Heroes of the Air

Illustrated in Colour by CYRUS CUNEO; also from photographs.

This book deals with the labours and exploits of those who have played an Important part in bringing about the conquest of the air. It not only contains personal memoirs of the men themselves, but traces the progress of aerial flight from the early gliders to the aeroplanes of to-day. The story of the experiments of those who first essayed to fly–the problems that long baffled them and the difficulties they overcame–together with the accounts of the daring feats of modern aviators, make a stirring narrative, and carry the history of heroism and endurance a stage further forward.

"This will prove a great attraction to a multitude of readers who wish to read of deeds of great daring and very narrow escapes."–*Nation.*

With the Airmen

Illustrated in Colour by CYRUS CUNEO, and with numerous black-and-white illustrations and diagrams.

Mr. Grahame-White has not only repeatedly proved his skill and daring as a pilot, but the well-known type of biplane bearing his name shows that he is in the forefront of designers and constructors. With his practical and technical knowledge is combined the somewhat rare ability to impart his knowledge in a form acceptable to boys, as he has already shown in his "Heroes of the Air." This time he has written a vade mecum for the young aeroplanist, who is conducted to the aerodrome and initiated into all the mysteries of flying. The structure of the aeroplane, the uses of the different parts, the propulsive mechanism, the steering apparatus, the work at a flying school, the causes of accidents, and the future of the aeroplane are all dealt with.

"It is surely one of the most entertaining books on a technical subject that have ever appeared, as well as one of the most instructive and comprehensive."–

Nation.

By CAPTAIN CHARLES GILSON

The Sword of Freedom

A Story of the English Revolution. Illustrated in Colour by FRANK GILLETT, R.I.

"The Sword of Freedom" deals with a critical period of English History: the downfall of the House of Stuart. In his grasp of the political situation in this country before the coming of William of Orange, as well as in his descriptions of contemporary life and manners, Captain Gilson shows himself to be not merely a recorder of stirring events, but an historian of no mean order. At the same time the story is exciting enough to please the most exacting, and the adventures of Sir Richard Vyse, who is arrested for complicity in the plot to bring over the Prince of Orange, and confined in the Tower, from which he makes a daring escape, will be followed with breathless interest.

"It is a most spirited tale and holds the reader from start to finish."–*Guardian.*

The Spy

A Story of the Peninsular War. Illustrated in Colour by CYRUS CUNEO.

To the work of story-writing Captain Gilson brings a remarkable combination of talents: an unrivalled knowledge of military history, an imagination that never flags, a dramatic literary style, and a keen sense of humour. These qualities are seen to perfection in "The Spy." The hero, Sir Jeffery Jones, Bart., when a boy of sixteen, secures a commission in a famous foot regiment, then under orders to sail for Portugal under the command of Sir Arthur Wellesley. His first encounter with the enemy takes place before he is fifty miles from home, for on the road to London he pursues and comes near to capturing a spy in the pay of Bonaparte. Several times subsequently the paths of the two cross, and eventually Sir Jeffery is the means of thwarting the Frenchman's schemes. He takes part in much of the fighting in the Peninsula, and, at the storming of Badajoz and elsewhere, renders his country good service.

"Every boy who loves tales of war and perilous enterprise–and what boy

does not?–will read 'The Spy' with unqualified enjoyment."–*Bookman.*

The Lost Empire

A Tale of Many Lands. Illustrated in Colour by CYRUS CUNEO. With Map.

This is the story of a middy who was taken prisoner by the French at the time of the Revolution. While in Paris he obtained possession of Napoleon's plans for the capture of India, and, after many adventures, was the means of frustrating that ambitious scheme.

The Lost Column

A Story of the Boxer Rebellion. Illustrated in Colour by CYRUS CUNEO.

At the outbreak of the great Boxer Rebellion in China, Gerald Wood, the hero of this story, was living with his mother and brother at Milton Towers, just outside Tientsin. When the storm broke and Tientsin was cut off from the rest of the world, the occupants of Milton Towers made a gallant defence, but were compelled by force of numbers to retire into the town. Then Gerald determined to go in quest of the relief column under Admiral Seymour. He carried his life in his hands, and on more than one occasion came within an ace of losing it; but he managed to reach his goal in safety, and was warmly commended by the Admiral on his achievement.

The Pirate Aeroplane

Illustrated in Colour by C. CLARK, R.I.

The heroes of this story, during a tour in an entirely unknown region of Africa, light upon a race of people directly descended from the Ancient Egyptians. This race–the Asmalians–has lived isolated from other communities. The scientific importance of this discovery is apparent to the travellers, and they are enthusiastic to know more of these strange people; but suddenly they find themselves in the midst of exciting adventures owing to the appearance of a pirate aeroplane–of a thoroughly up-to-date model–whose owner has learnt of a vast store of gold in the Asmalians' city. They throw in their lot with the people, and are able in the end to frustrate the plans of the freebooter.

"The story is a riot of adventure. There is the groundwork of a complete new novel on every page."–*Manchester Guardian.*

The Lost Island

Illustrated in Colour by CYRUS CUNEO.

A rousing story of adventure in the little-explored regions of Central Asia and in the South Seas. The prologue describes how Thomas Gaythorne obtained access to a Lama monastery, where he rendered the monks such great service that they bestowed upon him a gem of priceless value known as Gautama's Eye. Soon after leaving the monastery he was attacked and robbed, and only narrowly escaped with his life. "The Lost Island" describes the attempt of one of Thomas Gaythorne's descendants to re-discover the missing gem; and he passes through some remarkable adventures before he succeeds in this quest.

The Race Round the World

An Account of the Contest for the £100,000 Prize offered by the Combined Newspaper League. Coloured Illustrations by CYRUS CUNEO, and a map of the route of The Swallow.

Old Silas Agge has invented a new motor spirit, far more potent than petrol, and with this secret in his possession he has no doubt that he will win the £100,000 offered by a Newspaper League to the winner of the Aeroplane Race round the World. But a foreigner, with whom Silas has had business relations, succeeds in obtaining, first, the design of the aeroplane which the old man has built, and next, a sufficient quantity of the new spirit to carry him round the world. The race thus becomes a duel between these two rivals. Guy Kingston, a daring young aviator and nephew to Silas, pilots his uncle's aeroplane, and at every stage of the race finds himself matched against an unscrupulous adversary. The story of the race is exciting from beginning to end. Readers of Captain Gilson's earlier books will be particularly happy in renewing acquaintance with Mr. Wang, the great Chinese detective.

"Suggestive of Jules Verne in his most ambitious and fantastic vein."–*Athenaeum.*

"Boys will like it, and they will want to read it more than once."–*Scotsman.*

SCHOOL STORIES BY DESMOND COKE

The Bending of a Twig

Illustrated in Colour by H. M. BROCK.

When "The Bending of a Twig" was first published it was hailed by competent critics as the finest school story that had appeared since "Tom Brown." It is a vivid picture of life in a modern public school. The hero, Lycidas Marsh, enters Shrewsbury without having previously been to a preparatory school, drawing his ideas of school life from his imagination and a number of school stories he has read. How Lycidas finds his true level in this new world and worthily maintains the Salopian tradition is the theme of this most entrancing book.

"A real, live school story that carries conviction in every line."–*Standard.*

"Mr. Desmond Coke has given us one of the best accounts of public school life that we possess.... Among books of its kind 'The Bending of a Twig' deserves to become a classic."–*Outlook.*

The School Across the Road

Illustrated in Colour by H. M. BROCK.

The incidents of this story arise out of the uniting of two schools–"Warner's" and "Corunna"–under the name of "Winton," a name which the head master fondly hopes will become known far and wide as a great seat of learning. Unfortunately for the head master's ambition, however, the two sets of boys–hitherto rivals and enemies, now schoolfellows–do not take kindly to one another. Warner's men of might are discredited in the new school; Henderson, lately head boy, finds himself a mere nobody; while the inoffensive Dove is exalted and made prefect by reason of his attainments in class work. There is discord and insurrection and talk of expulsion, and the feud drags on until the rival factions have an opportunity of uniting against a common enemy. Then, in the enthusiasm aroused by the overthrow of a neighbouring agricultural college, the bitterness between them dies away, and the future of Winton is assured.

"This tale is told with a remarkable spirit, and all the boys are real, everyday characters drawn without exaggeration."–*British Weekly.*

The House Prefect

Illustrated in Colour by H. M. BROCK.

This story of the life at Seiton, a great English public school, mainly revolves around the trouble in which Bob Manders, new-made house prefect, finds himself, owing to a former alliance with the two wild spirits whom, in the interests of the house, it is now his chief task to suppress. In particular does the spirited exploit with which it opens–the whitewashing by night of a town statue

and the smashing of certain school property–raise itself against him, next term, when he has been set in authority. His two former friends persist in still regarding him as an ally, bound to them by their common secret; and, in a sense, he is attracted to their enterprises, for in becoming prefect he does not cease to be a boy. It is a great duel this, fought in the studies, the dormitories, upon the field.

"Quite one of the books of the season. Mr. Desmond Coke has proved himself a master."–*World.*

"Quite the best school story of the year."–*Morning Leader.*

By A. C. CURTIS

The Voyage of the "Sesame"

A Story of the Arctic. Illustrated in Colour.

The Trevelyan brothers receive from a dying sailor a rough chart of a locality where much gold is to be found in the Arctic regions. They set out in quest of it, but do not have things all their own way, for some rival treasure-seekers have got wind of the enterprise, and endeavour to secure the gold for themselves. There is a race between the two expeditions, and fighting takes place, but the crew of the Sesame are victorious, and after enduring great hardships amongst the ice, reach home safely with the gold on board.

The Good Sword Belgarde

or, How De Burgh held Dover. Coloured Illustrations by W. H. C. GROOME.

This is the story of Arnold Gyffard and John Wotton, pages to Sir Philip Daubeney, in the days when Prince Lewis the Lion invaded England and strove to win it from King John. It tells of their journey to Dover through a country swarming with foreign troops, and of many desperate fights by the way. In one of these Arnold wins from a French knight the good sword Belgarde, which he uses to such good purpose as to make his name feared. Then follows the great siege of Dover, full of exciting incidents, when by his gallant defence Hubert de Burgh keeps the key to England out of the Frenchman's grasp.

By FRANK H. MASON, R.B.A.

A Book of British Ships

Written and Illustrated by FRANK H. MASON, R.B.A.

The aim of this book is to present, in a form that will readily appeal to boys, a comprehensive account of British shipping, both naval and mercantile, and to trace its development from the old wooden walls of Nelson's time down to the Dreadnoughts and high-speed ocean liners of to-day. All kinds of British ships, from the battleship to the trawler, are dealt with, and the characteristic points of each type of vessel are explained.

By GEORGE SURREY

Mid Clash of Swords

A Story of the Sack of Rome. Coloured Illustrations by T. C. DUGDALE.

Wilfrid Salkeld, a young Englishman, enters the employ of Giuliano de Medici, the virtual ruler of Florence, whom he serves with a zeal that that faint-hearted man does not deserve; he meets Giovanni the Invincible; and makes friends with the great Benvenuto Cellini. He has many a fierce tussle with German mercenaries and Italian robbers, as well as with those whose jealousy he arouses by his superior skill in arms.

A Northumbrian in Arms

A Story of the Time of Hereward the Wake. Illustrated in Colour by J. FINNEMORE.

Harold Ulfsson, companion of Hereward the Wake and conqueror of the Wessex Champion in a great wrestling bout, is outlawed by the influence of a Norman knight, whose enmity he has aroused, and goes north to serve under Earl Siward of Northumbria in the war against Macbeth, the Scottish usurper. He assists in defeating an attack by a band of coast-raiders, takes their ship, and discovering that his father has been slain and his land seized by his enemy, follows him into Wales. He fights with Griffith the Welsh King, kills his enemy in a

desperate conflict amidst the hills, and, gaining the friendship of Harold, Earl of Wessex, his outlawry is removed and his lands restored to him.

By Rev. J. R. HOWDEN, B.D.

Locomotives of the World

Containing sixteen plates in Colour.

Many of the most up-to-date types of locomotives used on railways throughout the world are illustrated and described in this volume. The coloured plates have been made from actual photographs, and show the peculiar features of some truly remarkable engines. These peculiarities are fully explained in the text, written by the Rev. J. R. Howden, author of "The Boy's Book of Locomotives," etc.

By JOSEPH BOWES

The New-Chums

A Story of Adventure in Australia. Illustrated in Colour.

The "New-Chums" is a capital story of rough-and-tumble adventure in the "Territory," as the little-known northern region of the Australian continent is called. Mr. Bowes knows this region thoroughly, and much of the "New-Chums" is evidently based upon personal experience. His knowledge of the aborigines, too, is extensive, and he is able to describe their mode of life, their customs and curious beliefs in detail. They figure largely in this story, for the two heroes, after suffering shipwreck, fall into the hands of natives, who spare their lives and treat them with rough kindness. The boys pass through many strange experiences in company with the tribe, and have some exciting adventures before they find their way back to their own people.

Comrades

Illustrated in Colour by CYRUS CUNEO.

This book describes the adventures of three boys in the northern territory of Australia, whither they go with their uncle to gain health and acquire experience of farming and stock-raising. The life that awaits them is interesting and varied. They go on expeditions in search of natural history specimens, and assist in rounding-up cattle. Their great opportunity of adventure presents itself when a party of natives drive off a considerable number of cattle. The boys start in pursuit, and go through some dangerous scouting operations before they return successful.

By WILLIAM J. MARX

For the Admiral

Illustrated in Colour by ARCHIBALD WEBB.

The brave Huguenot Admiral Coligny is one of the heroes of French history. Edmond le Blanc, the son of a Huguenot gentleman, undertakes to convey a secret letter of warning to Coligny, and the adventures he meets with on the way lead to his accepting service in the Huguenot army. He shares in the hard fighting that took place in the neighbourhood of La Rochelle, does excellent work in scouting for the Admiral, and is everywhere that danger calls, along with his friend Roger Braund, a young Englishman who has come over to help the cause with a band of free-lances.

This story won the £100 prize offered by the Bookman for the best story for boys.

THE ROMANCE SERIES

The Romance of the King's Navy

By EDWARD FRASER. New Edition, with Illustrations in Colour by N. SOTHEBY PITCHER.

"The Romance of the King's Navy" is intended to give boys of to-day an

idea of some of the notable events that have happened under the White Ensign within the past few years. There is no other book of the kind in existence. It begins with incidents afloat during the Crimean War, when their grandfathers were boys themselves, and brings the story down to a year or two ago, with the startling adventure at Spithead of Submarine 64. One chapter tells the exciting story of "How the Navy's V.C.'s have been won," the deeds of the various heroes being brought all together here in one connected narrative for the first time.

"Mr. Fraser knows his facts well, and has set them out is an extremely interesting and attractive way."–*Westminster Gazette.*

The Romance of the King's Army

By A. B. TUCKER.

A companion volume to "The Romance of the King's Navy," telling again in glowing language the most inspiring incidents in the glorious history of our land forces. The charge of the 21st Lancers at Omdurman, the capture of the Dargai heights, the saving of the guns at Maiwand, are a few of the great stories of heroism and devotion that appear in this stirring volume.

"We cannot too highly commend this beautiful volume as a prize-book for schoolboys of all classes."–*School Guardian.*

The Romance of Every Day

By LILIAN QUILLER-COUCH.

Here is a bookful of romance and heroism; true stories of men, women, and children in early centuries and modern times who took the opportunities which came into their everyday lives and found themselves heroes and heroines; civilians who, without beat of drum or smoke of battle, without special training or words of encouragement, performed deeds worthy to be written in letters of gold.

"These stories are bound to encourage and inspire young readers to perform heroic actions."–*Bristol Daily Mercury.*

The Romance of the Merchant Venturers

By E. E. SPEIGHT and R. MORTON NANCE.

Britain's Sea Story

By E. E. SPEIGHT and E. MORTON NANCE. New Edition, Illustrated in Colour by H. SANDHAM.

These two books are full of true tales as exciting as any to be found in the story books, and at every few pages there is a fine illustration, in colour or black and white, of one of the stirring incidents described in the text.

By MEREDITH FLETCHER

The Pretenders

With Coloured Illustrations by HAROLD C. EARNSHAW.

A tale of twin-brothers at Daneborough School. Tommy Durrant (the narrator) has been a boarder for about a year, when Peter arrives upon the scene as a day-boy. The latter's ill-health has prevented him joining the school before, and, being a harum-scarum youngster, his vagaries plunge Tommy into hot water straight away. The following week, unaware of all the mischief he has made, the newcomer, who lives with an aunt, urges his twin to change places one night for a spree. Tommy rashly consents, and his experiences while pretending to be Peter prove both unexpected and exciting.

"Mr. Meredith Fletcher is extremely happy in his delineation of school life."–*People's Journal.*

The Complete Scout

Edited by MORLEY ADAMS, with numerous Illustrations and Diagrams.

This is a book intended primarily for boy scouts, but it also possesses an interest for all boys who like out-of-door amusements and scouting games. It contains many articles by different writers on the various pursuits and branches of study that scouts are more particularly interested in, such as wood-craft, tracking, the weather, and so on, and the book should form a sort of cyclopedia for many thousands of boys who hail Baden-Powell as Chief Scout.

By D. H. PARRY

Kit of the Carabineers

or, A Soldier of Marlborough's. Illustrated in Colour by ARCHIBALD WEBB.

This story tells how Kit Dawnay comes under the notice of the Duke of Marlborough while the latter is on a visit to Kit's uncle, Sir Jasper Dawnay, an irritable, miserly old man, suspected, moreover with good reason, of harbouring Jacobite plotters and of being himself favourable to the cause of the exiled Stuarts.

Kit, instructed by the Duke, is able to frustrate a scheme for the assassination of King William as he rides to Hampton Court, and the King, in return for Kit's service, gives him a cornet's commission in the King's Carabineers. He goes with the army to Flanders, takes part in the siege of Liege; accompanies Marlborough on those famous forced marches across Europe, whereby the great leader completely hoodwinked the enemy; and is present at the battle of Blenheim, where he wins distinction.

"The story bristles with dramatic incident, and the thrilling adventures which overtake the young hero, Kit Dawnay, are enough to keep one breathless with excitement."–*Bookman.*

By W. H. G. KINGSTON

Hurricane Hurry

Coloured Illustrations by ARCHIBALD WEBB.

This is one of W. H. G. Kingston's best books in the sense that it has an atmosphere of reality about it, and reads like the narrative of one who has actually passed through all the experiences described; and this is no mere illusion, for the author states in his preface that the material from which the story was built up was put into his hands by a well-known naval officer, who afterwards rote to the position of admiral. Mr. Hurry enters the navy as midshipman a few years before the outbreak of the American War of Independence, and during that war he distinguishes himself both on land and sea.

Will Weatherhelm

Coloured Illustrations by ARCHIBALD WEBB.

A splendid tale of the sea, full of incident and adventure, and a first-rate account of the sailor's life afloat in the days of the press-gang and the old wooden walls.. The author reveals his own ardent love of the sea and all that pertains to it, and this story embodies a true ideal of patriotic service.

By G. A. HENTY

In Times of Peril

A Story of India. Illustrated in Colour by T. C. DUGDALE.

Major Warrener and his children are stationed at Sandynugghur when news arrives that the native troops at Meerut have mutinied and murdered all the Europeans there and are marching upon Delhi. Almost immediately the Major's house is attacked and his family flee for their lives. The Major himself and some of his companions are taken prisoners, but only for a short time, for his sons, Ned and Dick, disguising themselves as Sepoys, are able to rescue them. The party after an anxious time fall in with a body of English troops who are on the way to relieve Delhi. Dick and Ned are in Cawnpore when the Europeans are attacked, but they escape by swimming instead of trusting themselves in boats. They take part in the storming of Delhi, which had been taken by the natives, and in the relief of Lucknow. The end of the Mutiny finds the whole family once more united.

Edited by HERBERT STRANG

Early Days in Canada
Pioneers in Canada
Early Days in Australia

Pioneers in Australia
Early Days in India
Duty and Danger in India

Each book contains eight plates in Colour.

The story of the discovery, conquest, settlement, and peaceful development of the great countries which now form part of the British Empire, is full of interest and romance. In this series of books the story is told in a number of extracts from the writings of historians, biographers, and travellers whose works are nut easily accessible to the general reader. Each volume is complete in itself and gives a vivid picture of the progress of the particular country with which it deals.

BOOKS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

HERBERT STRANG'S LIBRARY

This is a new series of standard books for boys and girls, comprising the great works of history, fiction, biography, travel, science, and poetry with which every boy and girl should be familiar, edited by Mr. HERBERT STRANG.

Each volume is prefaced by a short introduction, giving a biographical account of the author, or such information concerning the book itself as may be useful and interesting to young readers. Notes, maps, and plans are given where necessary.

The text of the books, many of which were not written primarily for children, is carefully edited both in regard to matters that are inherently unsuitable for their reading, and to passages that do not conform to modern standards of taste. In these and other respects the Editor will exercise a wide discretion.

The Library is illustrated with colour plates, reproduced by three-colour process from designs by H. M. BROCK, JAMES DURDEN, A. WEBB, and other well-known artists.

The following volumes are now ready:–

Adventures in the Rifle Brigade	By Sir John Kincaid
Westward Ho!	By Charles Kingsley

The Life of Wellington	By W. H. Maxwell
The Boy's Country Book	By William Howitt
Mungo Park's Travels	
The Coral Island	By R. M. Ballantyne
True Blue	By W. H. G. Kingston
Little Women	By Louisa Alcott
Good Wives	By Louisa Alcott
Tales from Hans Andersen	
Stories from Grimm	
Tom Brown's Schooldays	By Thomas Hughes
The Life of Nelson	By Robert Southey
Quentin Durward	By Sir Walter Scott
A Book of Golden Deeds	By Charlotte M. Yonge
A Wonder Book	By Nathaniel Hawthorne
What Katy Did	By Susan Coolidge
What Katy Did at School	By Susan Coolidge
What Katy Did Next	By Susan Coolidge
Ivanhoe	By Sir Walter Scott
Curiosities of Natural History	By Frank Buckland
Captain Cook's Voyages	
The Heroes	By Charles Kingsley
Robinson Crusoe	By Daniel Defoe
Tales from Shakespeare	By Charles and Mary Lamb
Peter the Whaler	By W. H. G. Kingston
Queechy	By Elizabeth Wetherell
The Wide Wide World	By Elizabeth Wetherell
Tanglewood Tales	By Nathaniel Hawthorne
The Life of Columbus	By Washington Irving
Battles of the Peninsular War	By Sir William Napier
Midshipman Easy	By Captain Marryat

Books for Girls

By CHRISTINA GOWANS WHYTE

Uncle Hilary's Nieces

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES BURDEN.

Until the death of their father, the course of life of Uncle Hilary's nieces had run smooth; but then the current of misfortune came upon them, carried them, with their mother and brothers, to London, and established them in a flat. Here, under the guardianship of Uncle Hilary, they enter into the spirit of their new situation; and when it comes to a question of ways and means, prove that they have both courage and resource. Thus Bertha secretly takes a position as stock-keeper to a fashionable dressmaker; Milly tries to write, and has the satisfaction of seeing her name in print; Edward takes up architecture and becomes engrossed in the study of "cupboards and kitchen sinks"; while all the rest contribute as well to the maintenance of the household as to the interest of the story.

"We have seldom read a prettier story than ... 'Uncle Hilary's Nieces.' ... It is a daintily woven plot clothed in a style that has already commended itself to many readers, and is bound to make more friends."–*Daily News.*

The Five Macleods

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES DURDEN.

The modern Louisa Alcott! That is the title that critics in England and America have bestowed on Miss Christina Gowans Whyte, whose "Story-Book Girls" they declare to be the best girls' story since "Little Women." Like the Leightons and the Howards, the Macleods are another of those delightful families whose doings, as described by Miss Whyte, make such entertaining reading. Each of the five Macleods possesses an individuality of her own. Elspeth is the eldest–sixteen, with her hair "very nearly up"–and her lovable nature makes her a favourite with every one; she is followed, in point of age, by the would-be masterful Winifred (otherwise Winks) and the independent Lil; while little Babs and Dorothy bring up the rear.

"Altogether a most charming story for girls."–*Schoolmaster.*

Nina's Career

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES BURDEN.

"Nina's Career" tells delightfully of a large family of girls and boys, children of Sir Christopher Howard. Friends of the Howards are Nina Wentworth, who lives with three aunts, and Gertrude Mannering. Gertrude is conscious of always missing in her life that which makes the lives of the Howards so joyous and

full. They may have "careers"; she must go to Court and through the wearying treadmill of the rich girls. The Howards get engaged, marry, go into hospitals, study in art schools; and in the end Gertrude also achieves happiness.

"We have been so badly in need of writers for girls who shall be in sympathy with the modern standard of intelligence, that we are grateful for the advent of Miss Whyte, who has not inaptly been described as the new Miss Alcott."–*Outlook.*

The Story-Book Girls

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES BURDEN.

This story won the £100 prize in the Bookman competition. The Leightons are a charming family. There is Mabel, the beauty, her nature, strength and sweetness mingled; and Jean, the downright, blunt, uncompromising; and Elma, the sympathetic, who champions everybody, and has a weakness for long words. And there is Cuthbert, too, the clever brother. Cuthbert is responsible for a good deal, for he saves Adelaide Maud from an accident, and brings the Story-Book Girls into the story. Every girl who reads this book will become acquainted with some of the realest, truest, best people in recent fiction.

"It is not too much to say that Miss Whyte has opened a new era in the history of girls' literature.... The writing, distinguished in itself, is enlivened by an all-pervading sense of humour."–*Manchester Courier.*

By J. M. WHITFELD

Tom who was Rachel

A Story of Australian Life. Illustrated in Colour by N. TENISON.

This is a story of Colonial life by an author who is new to English readers. In writing about Australia Miss Whitfeld is, in a very literal sense, at home; and no one can read her book without coming to the conclusion that she is equally so in drawing pen portraits of children. Her work possesses all the vigour and freshness that one usually associates with the Colonies, and at the same time preserves the best traditions of Louisa Alcott. In "Tom who was Rachel" the author has described a large family of children living on an up-country station; and the story presents a faithful picture of the everyday life of the bush. Rachel

(otherwise Miss Thompson, abbreviated to "Miss Tom," afterwards to "Tom") is the children's step-sister; and it is her influence for good over the wilder elements in their nature that provides the real motive of a story for which all English boys and girls will feel grateful.

Gladys and Jack

An Australian Story for Girls. Coloured Illustrations by N. TENISON.

Gladys and Jack are sister and brother, and, up to the point when the story opens, they have been the best of friends. Then, however, certain influences begin to work in the mind of Gladys, as the result of which a coolness springs up between her and her brother. Gladys puts on a superior air, and adopts a severely proper attitude towards Jack. Gladys has been in society, has come to be regarded as a beauty, and has been made a fuss of; consequently she becomes self-conscious. She goes to spend a holiday up-country, and here, too, her icily-regular line of conduct seems bound to bring her into conflict with her free-and-easy-going cousins. After some trying experiences, Gladys finds herself In a position which enables her, for the time being, to forget her own troubles, and exert all her strength on behalf of the rest. She comes worthily through the ordeal, earns the affection of her cousins, and Jack rejoices in the recovery of a lost sister.

"We have a large number of characters all clearly differentiated, plenty of incident, and much sparkling dialogue."–*Morning Post.*

The Colters

An Australian Story for Girls. Illustrated in Colour by GEORGE SOPER.

This book deals with a merry family of Australian boys and girls. There are a good many of them, and to each one Miss Whitfeld has imparted a distinct individuality. There is Hector, the eldest, manly and straightforward, and Matt, the plain-spoken, his younger brother. Ruby, quiet and gentle, with an aptitude for versifying, is well contrasted with her headstrong, impulsive cousin Effie. The author seizes upon the everyday occurrences of domestic life, turning them to good account; and she draws a charming picture of a family, united in heart, while differing very much in habit and temperament.

By ELSIE J. OXENHAM

Mistress Nanciebel

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES BURDEN.

This is a story of the Restoration. Nanciebel's father, Sir John Seymour, had so incurred the displeasure of King Charles by his persistent opposition to the threatened war against the Dutch, that he was sent out of the country. Nothing would dissuade Nanciebel from accompanying him, so they sailed away together and were duly landed on a desolate shore, which they afterwards discovered to be a part of Wales. Here, by perseverance and much hard toil, John o' Peace made a new home for his family, in which enterprise he owed not a little to the presence and constant help of Nanciebel, who is the embodiment of youthful optimism and womanly tenderness.

"A charming book for girls."–*Evening Standard.*

A NEW ALBUM FOR GIRLS

My Schooldays

An album in which girls can keep a record of their schooldays. In order that the entries may be neat and methodical, certain pages have been allotted to various different subjects, such as Addresses, Friends, Books, Matches, Birthdays, Concerts, Holidays, Theatricals, Presents, Prizes and Certificates, and so on. The 'album is beautifully decorated throughout.

By MRS. HERBERT STRANG

The Girl Crusoes

A Story of Three Girls in the South Seas. With Colour Illustrations by N. TENISON.

It is a common experience that young girls prefer stories written for their brothers to those written for themselves. They have the same love of adventure, the same admiration for brave and heroic deeds, as boys; and in these days

of women travellers and explorers there are countless instances of women displaying a courage and endurance in all respects equal to that of the other sex. Recognizing this, Mrs. Herbert Strang has written a story of adventure in which three English girls of the present day are the central figures, and in which the girl reader will find as much excitement and amusement as any boy's book could furnish.

By WINIFRED M. LETTS

The Quest of the Blue Rose

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES DURDEN.

After the death of her mother, Sylvia Sherwood has to make her own way in the world as a telegraph clerk. The world she finds herself in is a girls' hostel in a big northern city. For a while she can only see the uncongenial side of her surroundings; but when she has made a friend and found herself a niche, she begins to realise that though the Blue Rose may not be for her finding, there are still wild roses in every hedge. In the end, however, Sylvia, contented at last with her hard-working, humdrum life, finds herself the successful writer of a book of children's poems.

"Miss Letts has written a most entertaining work, which should become very popular. The humour is never forced, and the pathetic scenes are written with true feeling."–*School Guardian.*

Bridget of All Work

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES BURDEN.

The scene of the greater part of this story is laid in Lancashire, and the author has chosen her heroine from among those who know what it is to feel the pinch of want and strive loyally to combat it. There is a charm about Bridget Joy, moving about her kitchen, keeping a light heart under the most depressing surroundings. Girl though she is, it is her arm that encircles and protects those who should in other circumstances have been her guardians, and her brave heart that enables the word Home to retain its sweetness for those who are dependent on her.

"Miss Letts has written a story for which elder girls will be grateful, so simple and winning is it; and we recognise in the author's work a sense of character

and ease of style which ought to ensure its popularity."–*Globe*.

By ANGELA BRAZIL

A Terrible Tomboy

New Edition. With Coloured Illustrations by N. TENISON.

Peggy Vaughan, daughter of a country gentleman living on the Welsh border, is much too high-spirited to avoid getting continually into scrapes. She nearly gets drowned while birds'-nesting, scandalises the over-prim daughters of rich up-starts by her carelessness in matters of dress and etiquette, gets lost with her small brother while exploring caves, smokes out wild bees, and acts generally more like a boy than a girl. Naturally enough her father and school mistresses find her very difficult to manage, but her good humour and kindness of heart make it impossible to be angry with her for long. At the end of the story, when the family have become too poor to remain any longer in their old home, she makes a discovery which enables them to stay there.

By E. L. HAVERFIELD

Sylvia's Victory

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES BURDEN.

Owing to a change in the family fortunes, Sylvia Hughes is obliged to attend a day school in a small seaside town where she has the misfortune to make an enemy of the head girl, Phyllis Staunton-Taylor, who regards Sylvia as one belonging to an inferior set to her own. One day during the holidays Sylvia swims out and rescues Phyllis, who has got beyond her depth; but even this fails to establish amity between them, and no word of Sylvia's heroism gets abroad in the school. It is not until after she has experienced many trials and heartburnings that Sylvia learns the reason of Phyllis's apparent ingratitude and friendship is restored.

The Ogilvies' Adventures

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES BURDEN.

Hester Ogilvie and her elder, but less energetic, sister, daughters of a Canadian who is unable to support the whole of his family, are invited to spend a few years with their English uncle, Sir Hubert Campion, in order to finish their education. Hester is unable to please her uncle in any way, as his view of a finishing education differs very much from her own. At length she runs away to London to make her own living, but is taken back, and through a great service she does her uncle, he agrees to help her to carry out her original plans. Finally, he arranges that the Canadian and English branches of the family shall live together.

"A most delightful story, which is admirably suited to the average schoolgirl of to-day."–*Lady's Pictorial.*

Audrey's Awakening

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES BURDEN.

As a result of a luxurious and conventional upbringing, Audrey is a girl without ambitions, unsympathetic, and with a reputation for exclusiveness. Therefore, when Paul Forbes becomes her step-brother, and brings his free-and-easy notions into the Davidsons' old home, there begins to be trouble. Audrey discovers that she has feelings, and the results are not altogether pleasant. She takes a dislike to Paul at the outset; and the young people have to get through deep waters and some exciting times before things come right. Audrey's awakening is thorough, if painful.

"Is far above the average tale of school and home life."–*Aberdeen Free Press.*

The Conquest of Claudia

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES BURDEN.

Meta and Claudia Austin are two motherless girls with a much-occupied father. Their upbringing has therefore been left to a kindly governess, whose departure to be married makes the first change in the girls' lives. Having set their hearts upon going to school, they receive a new governess resentfully. Claudia is a person of instincts, and it does not take her long to discover that there is something mysterious about Miss Strongitharm. A clue upon which the children stumble leads to the notion that Miss Strongitharm is a Nihilist in hiding. That in spite of various strange happenings they are quite wrong is to be expected, but there is a genuine mystery about Miss Strongitharm which leads to some unforeseen adventures.

"A convincing story of girl life."–*School Guardian.*

Dauntless Patty.

Illustrated in Colour by DUDLEY TENNANT.

Patricia Garnett, an Australian girl, comes over to England to complete her education. She is unconventional and quite unused to English ways, and soon finds herself the most unpopular girl in the school. Several times she reveals her courage and high spirit, particularly in saving the life of Kathleen Lane, a girl with whom she is on very bad terms. All overtures of peace fail, however, for Patty feels that the other girls have no real liking for her, and she refuses to be patronised. Thus the feud is continued to the end of the term; and the climax of the story is reached when, in a cave in the face of a cliff, in imminent danger of being drowned, Patty and Kathleen for the first time understand each other, and lay the foundations of a lifelong friendship.

"A thoroughly faithful and stimulating story of schoolgirl life."–*Schoolmaster.*

"The story is well told. Some of the incidents are dramatic, without being unnatural; the interest is well sustained, and altogether the book is one of the best we have read."–*Glasgow Herald.*

By BRENDA GIRVIN

The Girl Scout

Illustrated in Colour by N. TENISON.

This is the story of a patrol of Girl Scouts, and the service they rendered their country. Colonel Norton announces that some silver cups, which he values as souvenirs of the time when he could win races and gymnastic competitions, have been stolen, and calls on the Boy Scouts to catch the thief, promising, if they succeed, to furnish their club-room in time for the reception of a neighbouring patrol. Aggie Phillips, sister of the boys' leader, hears of this, and at once organises a girls' patrol to help solve the mystery. In tracing the thief, the girls manage to entrap two foreigners, who, in all kinds of disguises, try to get hold of valuable papers in the hands of the Colonel. Meanwhile the boys continually follow up the tracks left by the girls, or are purposely misled by Aggie. The girls win the prize but arrange to join forces with the boys.

"The modern spirit is admirably shown in this excellent story."–*Lady's Pictorial.*

By ANNA CHAPIN RAY

Teddy: Her Daughter

Illustrated in Colour by N. TENISON.

Many young readers have already made the acquaintance of Teddy in Miss Anna Chapin Ray's previous story, "Teddy: Her Book." The heroine of the present story is Teddy's daughter Betty–a young lady with a strong will and decided opinions of her own. When she is first introduced to us she is staying on a holiday at Quantuck, a secluded seaside retreat; and Miss Ray describes the various members of this small summer community with considerable humour. Among others is Mrs. Van Hicks, a lady of great possessions but little culture, who seeks to put people under a lasting obligation to her by making friends with them. On hearing that a nephew of this estimable lady is about to arrive at Quantuck, Betty makes up her mind beforehand to dislike him. At first she almost succeeds, for, like herself, Percival has a temper, and can be "thorny" at times. As they come to know each other better, however, a less tempestuous state of things ensues, and eventually they cement a friendship that is destined to carry them far.

Nathalie's Sister

Illustrated in Colour by N. TENISON.

Nobody knows–or cares–much about Nathalie's Sister at the opening of this story. She is, indeed, merely Nathalie's sister, without a name of her own, shining with a borrowed light. Before the end is reached, however, her many good qualities have received the recognition they deserve, and she is Margaret Arterburn, enjoying the respect and admiration of all her friends. Her temper is none of the best: she has a way of going direct to the point in conversation, and her words have sometimes an unpleasant sting; yet when the time comes, she reveals that she is not lacking in the qualities of gentleness and affection, not to say heroism, which many young readers have already learned to associate with her sister Nathalie.

Nathalie's Chum

Illustrated in Colour by DUDLEY TENNANT.

This story deals with a chapter in the career of the Arterburn family, and particularly of Nathalie, a vivacious, strong-willed girl of fifteen. After the death

of their parents the children were scattered among different relatives, and the story describes the efforts of the eldest son, Harry, to bring them together again. At first there is a good deal of aloofness owing to the fact that, having been kept apart for so long, the children are practically strangers to each other; but at length Harry takes his sister Nathalie into his confidence and makes her his ally in the management of their small household, while she finds in him the chum of whom she has long felt the need.

"Another of those pleasant stories of American life which Miss Anna Chapin Ray knows so well how to write."–*Birmingham Post.*

Teddy: Her Book

A Story of Sweet Sixteen. Illustrated in Colour by ROBERT HOPE.

"Teddy is a delightful personage; and the story of her friendships, her ambitions, and her successes is thoroughly engrossing."–*World.*

"To read of Teddy is to love her."–*Yorkshire Daily Post.*

Janet: Her Winter in Quebec

Illustrated in Colour by GORDON BROWNE.

"The whole tone of the story is as bright and healthy as the atmosphere in which these happy months were spent."–*Outlook.*

"The sparkle of a Canadian winter ripples across Anna Chapin Ray's 'Janet.'"–*Lady's Pictorial.*

By L. B. WALFORD

A Sage of Sixteen

New Edition. Illustrated in Colour by JAMES BURDEN.

Elma, the heroine of this story, is called a sage by her wealthy and sophisticated relations in Park Lane, with whom she spends a half-holiday every week, and who regard her as a very wise young person. The rest of her time is passed at a small boarding-school, where, as might be supposed, Elma's friends look upon her rather as an ordinary healthy girl than as one possessing unusual wisdom. The story tells of Elma's humble life at school, her occasional excursions into

fashionable society; the difficulties she experiences in her endeavour to reconcile the two; and the way in which she eventually wins the hearts of those around her in both walks of life.

By ANNIE MATHESON

A Day Book for Girls

Containing a quotation for each day of the year, arranged by ANNIE MATHESON, with Colour Illustrations by C. E. BROCK.

Miss Annie Matheson is herself well known to many as a writer of hymns and poetry of a high order. In "A Day Book for Girls" she has brought together a large number of extracts both in poetry and prose, and so arranged them that they furnish an inspiring and ennobling watchword for each day of the year. Miss Matheson has spared no pains to secure variety and comprehensiveness in her selection of quotations; her list of authors ranges from Marcus Aurelius to Mr. Swinburne, and includes many who are very little known to the general public.

Books for Children

A Book of Children's Verse

Selected and Edited by MABEL and LILIAN QUILLER-COUCH. New Edition. Illustrated in Colour by M. ETHELDREDA GRAY.

This is a splendid anthology of children's verse. In addition to the old favourite poems, the volume contains many by modern authors, and others not generally known. The work of selection has been carried out with great care, and no effort has been spared to make the volume a worthy and comprehensive introduction to English poetry. The book is illustrated by a series of magnificent plates in colour.

By LUCAS MALET

Little Peter

A Christmas Morality for Children of any age. New Edition. Illustrated in Colour by CHARLES E. BROCK.

This delightful little story introduces to us a family dwelling upon the outskirts of a vast pine forest in France. There are Master Lepage who, as head of the household and a veteran of the wars, lays down the law upon all sorts of questions, domestic and political; his meek wife Susan; their two sons, Anthony and Paul; and Cincinnatus the cat–who holds as many opinions and expresses them as freely as Master Lepage himself; and–little Peter. Little Peter makes friends with John Paqualin, a queer, tall, crooked-backed old charcoal-burner, whom the boys of the village call "the grasshopper man"; but this is not surprising, since Little Peter makes friends with every one he meets, and all who read about him will certainly make friends with him.

"It is quite an ideal gift book, and one that will always be treasured."–*Globe*.

By CHRISTINA GOWANS WHYTE

The Adventures of Merrywink

Illustrated by M. V. WHEELHOUSE.

This story won the £100 prize in the Bookman competition for the best story for children.

This story tells of a pretty little child who was born into Fairyland with a gleaming star in his forehead. When his parents beheld this star they were filled with gladness and fear, and they carried their little Fairy baby, Merrywink, far away and hid him, because of two old prophecies: the first, that a daughter should be born to the King and Queen of Fairyland; the second that the King should rule over Fairyland until a child appeared with a star in his forehead. Now, on the very day that Merrywink was born, the little Princess arrived at the Palace; and the King sent round messages to make sure that the child with the gleaming star had not yet been seen in Fairyland. The story tells us how Merrywink grew up to be brave and strong, and fearless and truthful.

By MRS. HENRY DE LA PASTURE

The Unlucky Family

New Edition with Coloured Illustrations by C. E. BROCK.

This is one of the most humorous children's books published in recent years, and the many awkward dilemmas and diverting experiences which ensue upon the Chubb family's unexpected rise in the social scale cannot fail to delight young readers as well as their elders. In the matter of showing the propensity for getting into mischief these youngsters establish a record, but their escapades are generally of a harmless character and lead to nothing very serious.

"It is a clever and amusing tale, full of high spirits and good-natured mischief which children not too seriously inclined will enjoy."–*Scotsman.*

By M. I. A.

Sir Evelyn's Charge

New Edition, Illustrated in Colour.

"Sir Evelyn's Charge" is one of the most popular books for Sunday School prizes published within recent years, and has already run into very many editions. The object of the story is to show how the quiet, unconscious influence exerted by a little child upon those around him may be productive of lasting good. This new edition, with a new cover and colour plates, makes a very attractive gift-book.

THE PENDLETON SERIES

The Pendleton Twins

By E. M. JAMESON, Author of "The Pendletons," etc. With Coloured Illustrations.

The adventures of the Pendleton Twins begin the very day they leave home.

The train is snowed up and they are many hours delayed. They have a merry Christmas with plenty of fun and presents, and in the middle of the night Bob gives chase to a burglar. Nora, who is very sure-footed, goes off by herself one day and climbs the cliffs, thinking that no one will be any the wiser until her return. But the twins and Dan follow her unseen and are lost in a cave, where they find hidden treasure, left by smugglers, buried in the ground. Len sprains his ankle and they cannot return. Search parties set out from Cliffe, and spend many hours before the twins are found by Nora, cold and tired and frightened. But the holidays end very happily after all.

"Miss Jameson's books are written with such humour and lightness of touch that they hold the young readers, and not only amuse but instruct them."–*Dundee Courier.*

The Pendletons

By E. M. JAMESON. New Edition. Illustrated in Colour.

"Young people will revel in this most interesting and original story. The five young Pendletons are much as other children in a large family, varied in their ideas, quaint in their tastes, and wont to get into mischief at every turn. They are withal devoted to one another and to their home, and although often 'naughty,' are not by any means 'bad.' The interest in the doings of these youngsters is remarkably well sustained, and each chapter seems better than the last. With not a single dull page from start to finish and with twelve charming Illustrations, the book makes an ideal reward for either boys or girls."–*Schoolmaster.*

Peggy Pendleton's Plan

By E. M. JAMESON. New Edition. Illustrated in Colour by S. P. EARSE.

To many young readers the Pendleton children are quite old friends, as indeed they deserve to be, for they are so merry, so full of fun and good spirits, that nobody can read about them without coming to love them. In the opening chapter of this book the family meet together in solemn conclave to discuss plans for the holidays, which have just commenced. Every one of them has a favourite idea, but when the various selections are put to the vote, it is Peggy Pendleton's plan that carries the day. All the other children think it splendid. What that plan was, and what strange adventures it led to, are here set forth.

The Book of Baby Beasts

By FLORENCE E. DUGDALE. Illustrated in Colour by E. J. DETMOLD.

This book contains a series of simple little talks about baby animals, both wild and domestic. Each chapter is accompanied by a charming picture in colour by E. J. DETMOLD, whose work as an illustrator is well known, and whose characteristic delicacy of colouring is faithfully reproduced.

The Book of Baby Dogs

By CHARLES KABERRY. With nineteen plates in Colour by E. J. DETMOLD.

The Book of Baby Pets

By FLORENCE E. DUGDALE. Illustrated in Colour by E. J. DETMOLD.

"A valuable family possession, and one which admirably fulfils the rôle of guide, counsellor and friend."–*Athenaeum.*

The Book of Baby Birds

By FLORENCE E. DUGDALE. Illustrated in Colour by E. J. DETMOLD.

"Simply irresistible."–*Observer.*

Queen Mab's Daughters

From the French of JEROME DOUCET. Illustrated by HENRY MORIN.

This book consists of twelve stories, each concerned with an episode in the life of one of Queen Mab's daughters. These are very enterprising and adventurous princesses, somewhat wilful, indeed; and their activities, innocent though they are, often bring them into hot water. They fall into the hands of witches and wizards, and are the means of releasing from enchantment an equal number of princes who have been changed into bears, eagles, monkeys, and other animals by the powers of witchcraft. Their adventures are related with the charming daintiness wherein French fabulists, from Perrault downwards, have excelled; and the book is a decided acquisition to the store of fairy literature in which all children delight.

By VIOLET BRADBY

The Capel Cousins

Illustrated in Colour in C. E. BROCK.

The children in the Capel family hear that a cousin from South America is to live with them until his education is finished. On his arrival he is found to be very frank and outspoken, accustomed to say just what he thinks; and as his cousins are more reserved, the misunderstandings are by no means few. In time, however, he becomes used to English ways, and his good nature and cleverness win his cousins' admiration and affection. Mrs. Bradby writes as one who knows children thoroughly, and her pictures of home life are very charming.

"The authoress shows a power of depicting a large family of delightful and quite natural children which recalls the stories of Miss Yonge at her brightest."–*Church Times.*

"A very pleasant, natural, and brightly written story."–*Lady.*

The Happy Families

Illustrated by LILIAN A. GOVEY.

Most children have probably played the game of "Happy Families," and it is possible that they have woven stories round the grotesque characters that appear on the cards. This is what Mrs. Bradby has done in this book, and she has imagined a little girl being suddenly transported to Happy Family Land and finding herself beset on all hands by the Grits, the Chips and the Boneses, and all the other members of this strange and wonderful community.

By FLORENCE E. DUGDALE

(MRS. THOMAS HARDY)

In Lucy's Garden

Illustrated in Colour by J. CAMPBELL.

Miss Dugdale describes Lucy's garden from month to month, the plants that grow there, the insects that visit it, and the imaginary beings with which Lucy peoples it. During the first year Lucy is without any companion to share

her experiences, but at the beginning of the second year, just when she begins to feel lonely, she makes the acquaintance of a little boy, Peter, who is staying with his grandmother next door, and who, too, has grown tired of playing by himself. They gladly arrange that in future they will play together, as they like each other very much. Little ones who have gardens of their own will enjoy reading about Lucy's, especially when they know that she was capable of understanding what the apple trees and leaves and roses had to tell her about things in general and themselves in particular.

"A delightful 'Nature story' written in a charming vein of playful fancy, and daintily illustrated."–*Lady*.

By TERTIA BENNETT

Gentleman Dash

Illustrated in Colour by P. H. JOWETT.

This is a book that will appeal to all lovers of animals. Gentleman Dash is a fine collie who lives at a big house with a number of other dogs and cats. In spite of his handsome appearance, however, Dash sometimes falls so far from dignity as to run away and steal meat from butchers' shops. Then he is brought back and punished, and the other four-footed members of the family come round and offer sympathy–which is not pleasant. The relations that exist between the various dogs and cats of the establishment are friendly on the whole, though not invariably so. In the course of their conversations, the animals throw fresh light on the problems of life as viewed from the kennel and the yard.

By ALICE MASSIE

The Family's Jane

Illustrated in Colour by JOHN CAMPBELL.

This is the story of a little girl's search for her lost brothers and sisters. At first Jane did not know that she had any brothers or sisters, and she used to feel lonely. Then one day, quite by accident, she discovered that such was indeed the case, although for some unexplained reason they did not live at home

and she had been kept in ignorance of them. Then Jane set to work to reunite the dismembered family. The fact that Jane was only eight, and some of the others were quite grown up, with children of their own, did not turn her from her purpose, and eventually her efforts had the happy issue which they well deserved.

The Children's Bookcase

Edited by E. NESBIT

"The Children's Bookcase" is a new series of daintily illustrated books for little folks, which is intended ultimately to include all that is best in children's literature, whether old or new. The series is edited by Mrs. E. Nesbit, author of "The Would-be Goods" and many other well-known books for children; and particular care is given to binding, get-up, and illustrations.

Mrs. Overtheway's Remembrances

By JULIANA HORATIA EWING.

A delightful little book of short stories in which "the little old lady" who lives over the way relates incidents from her girlhood for the amusement of a young friend.

The Little Duke.

By CHARLOTTE M. YONGE.

Sonny Sahib.

By SARA JEANNETTE DUNCAN (Mrs. Everard Cotes). A charming story of Anglo-Indian life.

The Water Babies.

By CHARLES KINGSLEY.

The Old Nursery Stories.

By E. NESBIT.

In this book Mrs. E. Nesbit relates the old stories of the Nursery–”Cinderella,” ”Sleeping Beauty,” etc.

Cap-o’-Yellow.

By AGNES GROZIER HERBERTSON.

A charming series of fairy stories by one of the very few modern writers whose work compares with the classics of fairy-tale literature such as Grimm and Perrault.

Granny’s Wonderful Chair.

By FRANCES BROWNE.

The author of ”Little Lord Fauntleroy” declared this book to be the best fairy story ever written. Two generations of little readers have been of the same opinion as Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett.

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